

THE WIRE

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On CD

Igor Stravinsky



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when 'wire' reviewed springer and sarhandi's 'swans and turtles' last november, in amongst comparisons to kodaly, rosza, ravel, debussy, walton and the penguin café orchestra (!), they had this to say: 'i was converted within minutes . . . this i would say, is a duo with a future'. now listen to mark's 'menu', over an hour of inspired solo piano improvising.



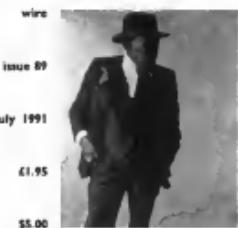
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the wire

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* now's the time

• ORNETTE COLEMAN has cancelled his scheduled concerts at London's Jazz Cafe this month. But Keith Jarrett, Oscar Peterson, Cab Calloway and Mel Torme are among the jazz big-names who will visit London in July. Pianist Jarrett plays a solo concert at the RFH (11); Peterson's more mainstream quartet are at the RAH (1); and both singer Torme (22, 23) and legendary bandleader Calloway (11) are at the Barbican Centre. For a reprise of the Capital Jazz Parade, with Miles, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, David Sanborn, BB King etc, see *In Town Tonight* on p 6.

• GERMAN ROBOTIC popsters Kraftwerk play several UK dates this month. They take the autobahn to Glasgow Barrowlands (11 July); Manchester Apollo (12); Liverpool Royal Court (13); Birmingham Hummingbird (15); Sheffield City Hall (16); Edinburgh Apollo (17); London Brixton Academy (19, 20).

• LOUIS MOHOLLO'S Exiles, Zila and Crying Out are among the groups who will be playing a special benefit concert at London's 100 Club on 2 July. The concert is to meet costs for the burial of South African singer Princess Patience Gwabe, who was murdered in her Brixton home on 2 April. Princess Patience Gwabe came to England in the 50s, and later spent time in the US working with such artists as Roland Kirk, Pharoah Sanders and McCoy Tyner.

The benefit concert will begin at 7.30pm and prices are £6, £5 (concessions).



Derek Bailey gets ready for his drum solo at this year's Company Week. Photo by Gerard Rouy

COMPANY BY THE BUCKET-LOAD

SAXIST JOHN Zorn, violinist Alexander Balanescu and US guitarist Buckethead – so-called because he plays with a bucket over his head! – are among the artists appearing at this year's Company Week of improvised music, organised by Derek Bailey. The festival, which runs at London's The Place Theatre, in Duke's Rd (near Euston Station), WC1, from 23–27 July, will also feature trombonist Yves Robert, percussionist Paul Lavers, vocalist Vanessa Mackness and the keyboards/electronics of Pat Thomas. Concerts begin at 7.30pm, prices are £7, £5 (concessions) or £21 for a season ticket. Bailey promises that "probably all the artists will appear every night" and also promises that two new CDs from his Incus label will be released in time for the festival: one is a reissue of the *Company* 6 and 7 LPs, the other features a new duo set by reeds player Alex Ward and percussionist Steve Noble.

• YOUSSEOU N'DOUR, Remmy Ongala, Kate and Anna McGarrigle and Marta Sebestyen have now been confirmed for the WOMAD Holiday Weekend at Lancashire's Morecambe Bay on 23–26 August. Other artists appearing include Scotland's Caudle Blase Orchestra, Lapland's Matti

Bonne Person, Mali's Toumani Diabaté and the UK's African Headcharge plus many more. Full details from 0524 582667. Meanwhile, Cleveland Warkiss and Canadian rappers Dream Warriors have been added to this month's WOMAD Festival at Reading (19–21 July).

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MORE VITAMIN, LESS VIBES

• RADIO 3 will pay tribute to the distinguished jazz writer and broadcaster Charles Fox, who died last May, by repeating his *Bird Line* programmes on the life of Charlie Parker. The series, which will go out in the regular half-hour Friday night jazz slot, begins on 21 June and runs for six weeks (6.30pm, repeated following Thursdays at 11pm).

• CROSSOVER SAXMAN John Harle plays four UK dates with the Bournemouth Sinfonietta this month, prior to recording a new CD for Decca. The concerts – and the CD – will feature pieces specially written for Harle by Gavin Bryars, Michael Nyman and Mike Westbrook. Dates are Devizes St John's Church (5 July), Swanage St Mary's (6); Andover St Mary's (7); Cheltenham Festival (13); Swindon Wyvern Theatre (14).

• LEADING SAXIST Andy Sheppard leads his Co-Motion quintet on several UK dates in July and August. Hear them at Glasgow Jazz Festival (5 July); Barnes Old Bull Arts Centre (11); Manchester venue etc (21); Sheffield Leadmill (23); London Waterloo Park (28); Taunton Brewhouse (3 August).

• U.S. MINIMALIST composer/keyboardist David Borden brings his Mother Mallard quintet to the UK for three July concerts as part of a European tour. They play at Barnes Old Bull Arts Centre (20 July); Portsmouth Solent Festival (22, lunchtime); London Barbican Foyer (24, teatime concert).

• EX-BLONDIE star Deborah Harry plays a series of solo UK dates in July. You can be touched by her presence at St Austell Coliseum (2 July); Bristol Colston Hall (3); Nottingham Royal Concert Hall (4); Wolverhampton Civic Centre (5); London Wembley Summer XS Festival (13); Manchester Apollo (14); Aberdeen Music Hall (16); Edinburgh Assembly Rooms (17); Glasgow Barrowlands (18); Southampton Mayflower (20); London Hammersmith Odeon (21). Details from local box offices.

• COURTNEY PINE, Celia Cruz and Branford Marsalis are among the artists who will be appearing on a new four-city UK touring circuit organised by Scotland's Assembly Direct. This month Celia Cruz and the Tito Puente Orchestra visit Manchester International 2 (11 July); Birmingham Town Hall (12); Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (13); London Hammersmith Palais (14).

• MOZART AND Prokofiev, two composers with major anniversaries this year, are featured extensively in the BBC Proms '91 concert season at London's RAH, which runs from 19 July to 14 September. The major Mozart concerts are of his operas *La Clemenza Di Tito* (25 August) and *Idomeneo* (13 September), while other performances include the *Requiem* and *Prague Symphony* (5 August) and the *Jupiter Symphony*. *Piano Concerto K466*, *Sinfonia Concertante K297B* and various arias (11 September). Prokofiev's opera *The Fiery Angel* (22 August) is sup-



Django bathes the boundaries at Platform One. Photo of Human Chain's music by Derek Ridgers

PLATFORM HAS LIFT-OFF

HUMAN CHAIN, Piano Circus, John Taverner and Rolf Hind are among the artists appearing at Platform One, a festival of new music that has been hastily organised to replace the now-defunct Almeida Festival. The Platform One festival, which takes place from 7-14 July at the Arts Theatre, Great Newport Street, London WC2, has been put together by pianist Joanna MacGregor with help from the musicians involved and theatre-director Richard Williams, who's based at the Arts Theatre. Full programme is Human Chain, George W. Welch (7 July); a George Crumb concert, Blingham String Quartet (8); a 'Cellos' concert (pieces by Boulez, Henze, Pärt); Simon Limbrick msrimba concert (9); Dufay Consort playing John Taverner's *Isle Of Light* and *Funeral Hymn*, introduced by the composer (10); Rolf Hind piano recital, inc pieces by Ligeti and Finnissey (12); Piano Circus, playing pieces by Steve Reich, Terry Riley a/o, cello/piano recital by Oystein Bakke and Joanna MacGregor; inc pieces by Duke Ellington, Schenck, Takemusu and Lutoslawski (14). Concerts, which take place in the afternoon and the evening, are at the Arts Theatre, except the Taverner which is at St Martin in the Fields. Full details from 071 836 2132/3334. The Platform One festival is supported by The Wire and by Collins Classics.

plemented by his *Piano Concerto No 2* (27 July), *Symphony No 5* (4 September) and music from *Alexander Nevsky* (12 August).

• EVAN PARKER, Barry Guy and Lol Coxhill are among the improv giants who'll be appearing in a series

of six Free Music concerts at London Islington's Angel & Crown, 235 Upper St, N1. Organised by trumpeter and *Wire* writer Roland Ramanan, the concerts will take place on Thursday nights between 27 June and 1 August, starting time is 8.30pm, prices are £4 (£3 concessions). Full line-up is Barry Guy, Marcio Mattos, Roberto Bellatella, Mario Castrovilli (27 June); Maggie Nicols, Vanessa Mackness, Paul Rutherford, Barry Guy (4 July); Evan Parker, Jon Lloyd, Roland Ramanan, Phil Wachsmann (11); Chris Biscoe, Phil Manton, Lol Coxhill, Tony Marsh, Mario Castrovilli (18); John Butcher, Matt Hurchinson, Mark Sanders, Roland Ramanan (25); Evan Parker, Mark Sanders, Paul Rogers (1 August).

• DAVID RUFFIN, bespectacled singer with The Temptations in their 60s heyday, died in Philadelphia of a drugs overdose on 1 June. He was 50 years old and had been fighting a desperate battle against drug addiction for nearly half of his life. Born in Whynor, Mississippi in 1941, Ruffin left his Southern gospel background to join The Temptations in 1964, his arrival coinciding with their first major hit, 'The Way You Do The Things You Do'. For four glorious years, Ruffin's husky baritone, in tandem with Eddie Kendricks' delicate falsetto, led the group on a string of hits that included 'Since I Lost My Baby', '(I Know) I'm Losing You', 'I Wish It Would Rain' and 'Ain't Too Proud To Beg'. By the time Ruffin left to pursue a solo career in 1968, The Temptations had become one

* now's the time

of the most successful groups in Motown history.

Though he had the occasional later hit, Ruffin never established himself as a solo star and the drug problems began to take their toll. He rejoined The Temptations for a special two-month reunion tour in 1982 (movingly recounted in Geri Hirsch's book *Nowhere To Run*) and returned again for the Motown 25th anniversary TV special in 1983. But in 1987 he was jailed for repeated cocaine use and parole violation and, despite treatment at a number of rehabilitation centres, he was never able to kick the drug habit.

in town tonight

July's selected jazz and blues gigs
(* indicates other concerts at this venue
are listed on pp 4-5)

Birmingham MAC (021 440 3838); Jazz Weekend - Billy Jenkins & VOGG (5); Pinski Zoo (6); Andy Hamilton Sextet (7); **Jazz Festival** (021 454 7020); Harper Brothers (7); Michel Petrucciani, James Morrison Qt (8); Albert Collins (9); BB King (10); Arturo Sandoval (11); Carol Kidd (12); Shorty Rogers/Bud Shank Lighthouse All Stars (13).

Colchester Whole Earth (0206 761050); Howard Riley, Pat Thomas (30). **Croydon Fairfield Concert Hall** (081 688 9291); Diane Reeves Qt (17). **Glasgow Jazz Festival*** (041 552 3572); Herbie Hancock/Wayne Shorter Qt (1); Oscar Peterson Qt (2); John Scofield (3); BB King, Arturo Sandoval (4); David Sanborn (6); Michel Petrucciani (7).

Leicester Phoenix (0533 354854); District Six (20). **Sheffield Jazz Festival*** (0742

754500); Red Rodney Qt (12); Hornweb (13); Ian Shaw/Carol Grimes (13); Red Holloway (14); The Next Decade (17); The Jazz Garden (19); Jimmy McGriff Qt (21).

Finally, a lot of London highlights. **Barbican Centre EC2*** (071 638 8891); Arturo Sandoval (11). **Bass Clef NI** (071 729 2476); Louis Moholo Qt (9). **Crystal Palace Bowl SE19** (071 240 7200); John Lee Hooker, Robert Cray (6). **Hendon Park NW11** (081 449 0048); Django Bates's Delightful Precipice plus circus (4-6).

Jazz Cafe NW1 (071 284 4358); Steps Ahead (1); Astrud Gilberto (2-4); Rebirth Brass Band (8-11); Elaine Elias Qt (12); Terence Blanchard Qt (15-20); Jon Hendricks (28); Stanley Turrentine Qt (29-3 Aug).

100 Club W1* (071 636 0933); John Surman's Brass Project (7). **RFH SE1** (071 928 8800); Capital Radio Jazz Parade - The Blues Brothers (13); Herbie Hancock/Wayne Shorter Qt (16); Chuck Corea, Michel Petrucciani (17); BB King (18); Miles Davis (19); David Sanborn (20).

Ronnie Scott's W1 (071 439 0747); Jimmy McGriff Trio (1-6); Harper Brothers (8-13); Red Rodney (15-27). **Swan W6** (081 748 1043); Dreamtime Tentet (2); No Rules OK (9); Full Moon (16); John Burgess Trio (23); Conspiracy (30). **Tenor Clef NI** (071 729 2476); Ray Bryant (2-7); Chris Biscoe Trio (8); Lou Stern/Wayne Krantz (11, 12); John Stubblefield (23-27); Joey Calderazzo Trio (30-3 Aug). **Town & Country NW3** (071 284 1221); Buddy Guy (9). **Town & Country 2 N5** (071 700 5716); Buddy Guy (8).

Z'EV: PERCUSSIONIST

by Mark Sinker

If you asked him how he'd changed the world to date, Z'ev would indicate the sound of metal in music all around, scraped or hammered or dropped; his success story (and not a bad one), that he parades into everyone else's head to pursue this. The rest of the story takes longer to tell. The primally innovative non-genre drummer of our age has a Touch double-CD retrospective to celebrate his first 23 years of front-line cultural activism - that's four daunting hours of Stefan Weisser in all guises, clattering his way back to the notion of one musician invoking archetypes, exploring sound-in-time's interactions with the space it fills.

Encounters with Fluxus art-mischief-makers and World Music drum orchestras in the late '60s awoke deeper dreams in him than the pop and West Coast jazzrock drumming he'd begun with: he turned himself into a sound-sculptor. Encounters with avant-punkers at *RE/Search* magazine put him at the heart of the Industrial Culture wave, alongside Throbbing Gristle and Boyd Rice, where he flung himself like a wild man at his stage-fulls of factory detritus. Inspired, Neubauten and Test Dept clambered out into the light. Z'ev, uninterested in pop notoriety (he was in the first ever video-release by a record company - back when no one owned a VCR), burrowed deeper, waited for the world to come round his way, while he subverted the marital bear of Western culture.

"My preferred performance situation is to play in the dark, because it just happens that the work is about inducing visualisations, that synaesthetic experience where you hear something but you see it. Inducing inner visualising states. Most of that comes through from just an understanding of rhythm, more than the quality of the sound. It's the rhythm proportions that affect people."

Perhaps the world has almost come round his way, or some of it. Samplers have finally let loose a generation of non-musician musicians who hear music not as music but as sound, and build from there. Hard Techno, he recognises, may well be where the next dangerous wave begins. In the past, he's worked with John Cage, Bow Gamelan and Glenn Branca. In the future, he has projects lined up with Lydia Lunch, Psychic TV and Gylan Kain (of the original Last Poets). Cultural revolutionaries all.

"When I was three or four years old, what my mother would do for toys to entertain my sister and me for the day, was to empty out her cupboard of pots and pans. These were our toys. My sister would cook and I was always drumming with them. So obviously my first drumming wasn't with drums, but with metal - and there was also this notion of taking something that's not a drum and making it into a drum."

In the beginning - remember? - there was rhythm.

1968-1990 *One Foot In The Grave* is available from Touch, 13 Oswald Road, London SW17 7SS (or via Rough Trade distribution).

HILTON RUIZ: LATIN PIANIST

by Tony Herrington

"IT'S NOT HARD to explain about my music. It's jazz to a Latin beat. That's what it is."



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+ now's the time

Hilton Ruiz's rather casual description of his music is none the less accurate. Jazz-derived harmonies, arrangements and solos over Afro-Cuban-based rhythms. Add some fusion dynamics and a little funk attitude and you've got the broad picture.

This month sees the release of Hilton's 15th solo album, his fifth since signing to RCA Novus in 1987. "It's called *A Moment's Notice*," he explains. "Basically it's an extension of my last album *Don't It Right*."

For *Don't It Right* Hilton broke the pattern set by his previous Novus albums (*Something Grand*, *El Camino*, *Stray*) by replacing their pristine Latin fusion with a set of jazz, piano-based, small group performances. "That was the idea of Steve Backer, series director of Novus," he explains. "He thought we should focus more on my pianistic abilities."

Don't It Right featured guest solos from Don Cherry. Previous albums by the pianist have contained performances by musicians of the calibre of Sam Rivers, Steve Turre and Lew Soloff. *A Moment's Notice* continues this trend by featuring a horn section of George Coleman, Kenny Garrett and Dave Valentine. "For me they are the icing on the cake on this record," enthuses Hilton. "Not only are they great soloists but they were able to fit the concept of the music."

That concept manifests itself best during the record's various cover versions. Hilton explains further: "We recorded two of John Coltrane's compositions, 'Naima', using a 6/8 Afro-Cuban rhythm, and 'A Moment's Notice', done as a mambo. We also did 'Strange', a Nat King Cole tune, as a Latin boop kind of thing, and Latinized versions of 'Like Someone In Love' and 'Mambo Inn'. Basically I wanted to introduce the authentic, Afro-Caribbean clavé beat in order to make these tunes stronger rhythmically. Certain jazz tunes lend themselves naturally to Latin rhythms, it enhances them, moves them forward, brings out new qualities and possibilities. That's why we bring them together."

Such an approach might seem instinctive to a musician like Hilton Ruiz. For a second generation Puerto Rican growing up in New York City during the 60s and 70s his musical background was remarkably comprehensive. Roland Kirk, Pharoah Sanders, Ray Barretto, Tito Puente, Joe Henderson and Freddie Hubbard are just some of the names he has appeared with. "That's not to say there isn't anything left to learn. "I'm doing a lot of research right now," he claims. "I'm finally studying percussion seriously, actually putting my hands on the skins of the drum. To understand Latin music you have to start with that Afro-Cuban tradition of the drum. But at the same time I'm also studying computers and sampling. I listen to a lot of rap music. It's all part of making myself a more complete musician, widening my scope and understanding, because the more you know, the higher you can go."

JOANNA MACGREGOR: PIANIST

by Barry Witherden

JOANNA MACGREGOR has earned an impressive reputation as an interpreter of 20th Century music. Her debut album included pieces by Ives, Copland, Nancarrow, Cowell and Monk (a mixture which ruffled a few feathers) and she made the world premiere recording of the original version of Britten's piano concerto



Joanna Newsom. Photo by Howard Sooley

(on Collins Classics). Her repertoire also includes Satie, Fianissky, Ligeti, Béla and Xenakis. At this year's Proms she premieres a concerto commissioned by the BBC from Hugh Wood, with whom she studied at Cambridge, and in November she will be appearing at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

If her repertoire testifies to her commitment to contemporary music, that commitment has been given even more practical expression through the Platform One festival which she has set up at London's Arts Theatre Club.

"I happened to be listening to an interview on Radio 3 with people who work at the Almeida and it became clear that there wasn't going to be a contemporary music festival this year. I was really upset, and the energy of that motivated me to try to put on a festival of my own."

For a decade Islington's Almeida Festival has been an oasis of excellent contemporary music, running outstanding seasons on Steve Reich and Toru Takemitsu, breaking Schnittke and Pärt into public notice, and airing the music of such quirky maestros as H K Gruber.

"The Almeida festival was vastly important to contemporary music in this country. It was a bit eccentric and slightly anarchic, and it really did seek out what was going on in Europe and bring it over here."

The programme she has planned, and her achievement in starting from scratch, is impressive.

"All I've tried to do is to throw things together. I mean literally. This is all the result of just three weeks' work so far. I'm just trying to give people an opportunity to play new music. I wanted to represent everything going on in contemporary music, including jazz and post-modernist stuff. The current generation of musicians don't have the same compartments in their mind, and I wanted to get across to audiences that there are links between different types of new music."

Already she has managed to interest Radio 3, Channel 4, *The Wire* and the Collins Classics record label in the concert. "This whole thing was put together on the basis of me ringing up performers I knew and saying, do you feel strongly enough about this to come and play? I'd say, I'll try and sort out the box office and put you on but there's no money. People have said yes because they want to see something start up again."

MacGregor is only performing in two concerts, and one of those was effectively forced on her. Having asked cellist Øystein Birkeland to come over from Norway and play for nothing she could hardly refuse

when he asked her to appear with him. They will be playing pieces by Takemitsu, Osborne, Lutoslawski, Ellington and Schnittke. She is particularly enthusiastic about some "astoundingly theatrical and epic" compositions by George Crumb, "a bit of a forgotten figure in this country". She will be one of two pianists for "Music For A Summer Evening" and Lore Lixenborg and Jerome Finniss will be singing "Ancient Voices Of Children". Other goodies include concerts by Simon Limbeck, Piano Circus and Rolf Hind, a composers' forum and a congress of 13 cellists playing pieces by Boulez, Henze and Pärt (one of the various transcriptions of his unbearably beautiful *Fratres*).

To take advantage of the venue's theatrical lighting rig Joanna has also hired a lighting designer, which many of the performers have been pleased about. "We don't want to tip over into a pseudo-rock presentation, but we do want to create an ambience."

Details of the Platform One festival are on p 5.

• OBITUARY •

STAN GETZ

1927-1991



Stan Getz. Photo by Christian Hill

JAZZ LOST one of its most popular and enduring figures with the death of Stan Getz on 7 June. He had been battling with cancer for some time, and although both surgery and homeopathic treatment had kept him alive and playing, he eventually succumbed to the disease at the age of 64.

Stan Getz was a major presence in jazz for 45 years. His first prominent role was as one of the Four Brothers, Woody Herman's great sax section of 1947, and as one of the premier tenor stylists to emerge in the wake of Lester Young, he contributed a vast number of recordings and improvisations to the jazz literature. His principal albums of the 50s — *West Coast Jazz*, *At The Shrine*, *The Steamer* — set down a playing standard which, in its smoothness of delivery, seamless improvisatory flow, impeccable delineation of dynamics, melodious tone, flawless timing and unassuming virtuosity, was the envy of other players and the palliative for listeners who found the harder aspects of hard bop too rough on the ears.

Getz was always acclaimed as the great ballad stylist among saxophonists, thanks mainly to the fearlessly lyrical which he could elicit at fast or slow tempos. But he was never much of

an innovator, perhaps not even much of an influence. An essential lightness of substance and a frequent reversion to familiar phrases mark much of his playing: the intense prettiness of his sound was often enough to sustain otherwise unexceptional playing.

He participated in one of the few especially successful attempts at jazz-and-strings, the Eddie Sauter arrangements for *Focus*, and his bossa nova recordings with Astrud and Joao Gilberto were and remain gorgeous investigations of the possibilities of jazz-pop. Getz would often complain that people expected him to do no more than bossa nova material in subsequent years, but he maintained a recording regimen that hewed close to the timeless virtues of tenor-and-rhythm.

Flirtations with fusion in the 70s are best forgotten. In the 80s, autumnal recitals like *Pure Getz* (Concord) restored faith in a musician who disliked having to suffer any fools and who had little time for conceitful fripperies or music as revolutionary force. His final works, including *Apasionado* (A&M) and *Serenity* (Emarcy), are as vigorous and uplifting as any of his many records. His sound will endure for many as one of the things they liked best about jazz.

RICHARD COOK

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The Wire * It's never just one of those things

Each month we test a musician with a series of records which they're asked to comment on and "mark out of five" - with no prior knowledge of what it is they're hearing! This month: John Harle takes the test with Philip Watson.

A SELF-CONFESSED "musical magpie", saxophonist John Harle has always borrowed freely from a very eclectic range of sources. Yet he has also carved out a very singular niche as a soloist and composer, championing saxophone music in areas such as contemporary classical and chamber music where it has been traditionally neglected.

Classically trained at the Royal College of Music and the Paris Conservatoire, and now professor of saxophone at Guildhall, Harle is a 34-year-old alto and soprano player whose current repertoire takes in everything from Eric Satie to Gunther Schuller, Chick Corea and Philip Glass. Much of it has been specially written for him by the likes of Luciano Berio, Harrison Birtwistle and Richard Rodney Bennett. Harle also leads a jazz-rock group, The John Harle Band (the successor to his 80s Berliner Band devoted to the Brecht/Weill/Eisler repertoire), and he has worked on two film scores with Stanley Myers, *Prick Up Your Ears* and the forthcoming *Voyager* directed by Volker Schlöndorff.

Recently signed to EMI Classics, Harle has already recorded two albums for the label, set for release later this year. *Dokidé*, a collection of Ellington compositions, was recorded with such players as Stan Tracey, Tony Coe and Pete King, and he has also produced an album of classical concertos by Debussy, Ibert, Glazunov and Villa-Lobos with Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. This month he can be heard touring south-west England with the Bournemouth Sinfonietta premiering three new saxophone concertos by Mike Werbrouck, Michael Nyman and Gavin Bryars.

JOHNNY HODGES

"Prelude To A Kiss" from *Ellington Indigo* (CBS) Hodges (as) with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra.

Hodges with Ellington. This to me is one of the greatest, most human and alive sounds in



John Harle. Photo by Nick Sinclair

the history of music, never mind just the saxophone. It's great because the guy couldn't improvise *fac*, really, but he's instantly recognisable; you only have to listen to three notes with the Ellington band and he's ripped your stomach out. What I deeply admire in his work is the vocal quality. Everybody says that the saxophone sounds like the human voice, but bloody hell, there's nothing more like the human voice than Johnny Hodges. Five stars.

STEVE LACY

"Trinkle Tinkle" from *Mow Monk* (Soul Note). Lacy (ss).

Is it Evan (Parker)? Lol (Coxhill)? Oh, it's Wayne Shorter. No? Well, it's solo soprano, so is it Steve Lacy? I can't mark something by Steve Lacy, it's not right, the guy is such an original. I feel the same about Evan Parker. Christ, it's like a colossus placed in front of you. You may not like all of these guys'

output, but there's no point at which you can ever question their integrity. I admire Steve Lacy because he has always had his own vision. It isn't a vision that I share, because it's almost entirely atonal - I don't know where lots of these notes come from - but that doesn't mean that I don't relish sharing the same language. Marks: 4.9.

BRANFORD MARSALIS

"Prelude" from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* by Ravel from *Romance For Saxophone* (CBS Masterworks). Marsalis (ss) with The English Chamber Orchestra directed by Andrew Litton.

Percy Grainger? Could be a French player, but it's not, it's English. Vaughan Williams? If it's any guide, I hate the sound of the soprano, it's crawling. Honegger?

It's Branford Marsalis.

Oh, I know this record. I think it sounded like a nice piece, which it would if it was

Ravel, but I don't like the sound because it's not smooth. I thought it was a French classical player because they always seem to use too much spit and sawdust in the sound. In classical music it very often doesn't seem to use that kind of grainier saxophone tone, what really suits is a bright, in tune, very clean, modern sound, and to me I didn't like that because it didn't suit the music. Jazz musicians can play classical. The Benny Goodman Mozart with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Woody Herman Prelude, Fugue and Riffs were completely appropriate for their time. This album was inappropriate because it put too many demands on the soloist.

Mark?

Zero.

OLIVER LAKE

"In A Sentimental Mood" from *World Saxophone Quartet Plays Duke Ellington* (Noneuch), Lake (as); Julius Hemphill (as); David Murray (ts); Hamiet Bluiett (bs)

Is it Bobby Watson on alto? No! The World Saxophone Quartet? But I don't know the soloist.

It's Oliver Lake.

I don't really like this. What I can't understand is why a tune like "In A Sentimental Mood" needs to sound like this, like an avant-garde exploration of the non-existent outer territories of the harmony. Why do we need to feel like we've been pulled through a hedge backwards? I remember talking to the Guildhall Saxophone Ensemble about the WSQ and many of them

thought they were so out of tune they were unlistenable. I think I agree, but still, I'll give it 3.33 recurring.

CHARLIE PARKER

"What Is This Thing Called Love" from *Charlie Parker With Strings* (Verve). Parker (as); Al Haig (p); Tommy Potter (b); Roy Haynes (d) plus strings.

Bird With Strings. Bird was the greatest improviser ever. The important thing about Bird is that as he improvises you can understand him immediately, it's completely natural. He may improvise with great complexity, but there's an immediate communication; however fast he's playing, you always know what's going on, it retains a sense that really holds an audience. And I'm just in love with this record; the inclusion of the harp and oboe is absurd, but I love it for that. I love the contrast between one of the greatest musicians that ever lived - he just flies over these sequences - and the grinding of the harmonic cogs of the orchestra. Five stars.

THE BERLIN SAXOPHONE QUARTET

"Saxophone Quartet Op 109" by Alexander Glazunov from *Saxophone Quartets* (Schwann). Detlef Bensman (ss); Rainer Ehrhard (as); Christof Grise (ts); Friedemann Graef (bs).

I know this (sing: melody). I've played it, but I can't remember what it's called. Is it the Schmidt Quartet?

It's the Berliner Saxophone Quartet playing Glazunov.

It's quite respectably played, especially

compared to the intonation on the other quartet record. I admire Glazunov because he gave the saxophone very, very pure classical lines to play. The differences between the Glazunov concerto and the Ibert or the Villa-Lobos is that the other pieces are more bravura, more to do with virtuoso technique. The Glazunov is about the ability to stand completely straightforwardly in front of an audience and play an absolutely pure classical line like a violin concerto. It makes you present a clear image of the saxophone as a classical instrument, and at that point it becomes more difficult. I'd like to separate the marks here. 3.33 for the performance, 2.99 for the composition.

DAVID SANBORN

"Priestess" from *Priestess* (Antilles). Sanborn (as) with the Gil Evans Big Band.

Sanborn. With Carla Bley? Some of it's more like Steve Swallow or Mike Gibbs. Gil Evans? Sanborn upsets me, but in a nice way. There are certain things about him that I completely fall in love with every time, like his timing for example, but he's like a favourite drug. Some people think Sanborn is a loud player, but close-up he can be very gentle - he's a surprisingly sensitive soloist. And Gil Evans, as I've said before, represents the highest form of what I'm trying to do. To see that band on *The Sound Of Miles Davis* programme - that's the period I really love, the *Porgy & Bess*, *Sketches Of Spain* period. So because you've picked slightly the wrong period of Gil Evans for me, I'll give it 4.99 again.

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I will stand out . . .

St Louis alto man Greg Osby took up music to escape the bullets of street gangs.

Now he's with M-Base, on Blue Note and digging flak from the neo-conservative.

Richard Cook: *windy blues schiz* and *lets his tape machine do the talking . . .* Photo by Adri Berger

I GREW UP in a totally non-musical environment. I grew up in the streets in St Louis, in a fatherless family. It shaped my whole attitude. From day to day, survival, man. I didn't get into music until 1972, when I was 12 years old, and there was a vacancy in the elementary school ensemble. It was a choice of clarinet or trombone, and I chose clarinet. I played in local bands, funk bands, but I still wasn't that interested in music, not as a career. When I was 16, I was involved in a lot of gang life. You had to participate, or become the next victim. When I was shot at, that made me decide to be a musician and get off the streets.

I was offered a free place at Howard University in Washington DC and I went there in 1978 but I was immediately disappointed. They were teaching us a lot of European tendencies, madrigals, fugues, canons and stuff, a lot of things I use in my work today, but then I was totally unappreciative. Quite the upstart. I made my dismay known daily. I'd learned a lot by ear, playing in St Louis, but no orthodox study. My mother worked for a record distributor and she used to bring home DJ copies of things, all kinds of things, and a listening session could go from Rod Stewart to Harry Belafonte to John Coltrane to Beethoven. I like to proclaim that I have no allegiance to any one style.

I was invited to visit Berklee, in Boston, and I was impressed that there was a lot of practical playing and a lot of young blacks there, a lot of camaraderie. And I got a recommendation to go there, after two years at Howard. It was a culture shock for me, because I'd had no experience with mixing with other races before. But I grew tired of it there. I'm very antsy, very restless. People there were already getting gigs and moving to New York. In my third year, I'd be going to New York every weekend and sitting in and giving out my number. In '83, Jon Faddis, the great studio trumpeter, was starting a band and he asked around for a talented but not too well-known player, and my name kept coming up. He called me and said he had a tour coming up in a month. I had two months before graduating. There it was. So I pulled the plug on the academic thing.

IT WAS A bebop situation, real traditional, but I was glad to be a part of the New York scene and making money. I could buy 700-dollar suits and snakeskin shoes and cold-

blooded ties! All the stuff I dug. Everything went well until November, when he was having some personal problems, and he had to put the band on the back burner. I'm living in an apartment with four other cats who weren't as fastidious as me. Here I am, my funds are depleted, it's winter, and it's cold in winter. So I got the dreaded day gig. I have a lot of pride, I didn't want to do anything that was too visible, so I worked for a cleaning service. Humiliating. Five years of college, and I'm scrubbing floors. Lowest point of my life.

I'd still bogart at night, go out and sit in. I was already bad. I started working with some of the more avant-garde musicians, like David Murray, Julius Hemphill, Lester Bowie. I did some jingles, but I didn't like the attitude of the other musicians. They didn't talk about music, they talked about the new condo they just bought; I stuck it out.

Cannonball Adderley was my favourite player. But at home I was trying to work out a different system, something I call shifting melodic order. Then I met Steve Coleman. I'd already heard about him in Boston. We got together, and there'd be cats like Smiley Smith and Dave Holland, we'd always be discussing different approaches and how music should change. It really seemed stagnant then. The neo-conservative thing was in full swing, everyone wearing suits and ties, and talking about the old days. Frustrating. I wanted to address now, and tomorrow. But if you played that kind of stuff in public, you'd work less.

Steve and I decided to pool our resources. We put out this call to the musicians in New York, and had this kind of summit meeting, with maybe 50 musicians there. That was the beginning of what is now M-Base. It dwindled down from those 50 to maybe 15 or 20 people. This is '86. We'd talk about business, distribution, promotion, working towards being self-supportive. You talk about M-Base, you're talking about us. We continue to work, continue to build.

I'm with Blue Note now because I needed better distribution and company support. People wanted to get my records and they couldn't. Now I'm with an American company. I can go in there and beef if I have to. Before, with a European company, I could only send faxes. And in the whole history of Blue Note, there was no one who played like me, sounded like me, or did what I wanted to do. I will stand out, instead of being one in the bunch.



hardwire

Tom Corbin announces The Wire Scholarship winners, then bids from Mr Yamaha.



Well, the dust has finally settled after the good-natured scramble for the two scholarships we offered to the Mid Glamorgan Jazz Summer School in the April issue. Even as we speak, the successful applicants – reedsperson Nick Mahony of London and pianist Jonathan Taylor of Winchester (via Bino, but that's another story) will be counting the days until the end of July when the course starts. Congratulations, gentlemen.

Many thanks to everyone who applied. Much as we'd expected, volume and standard of applications were high. What was very interesting, however, was the wide range of musical backgrounds in evidence, ranging from dyed-in-the-dufflecoat hard jazzers to qualified classical players looking for a new experience and from solitary self taught players to award-winning music graduates. And, also much as we'd expected, we found it very exasperating to have to turn down so many excellent applications.

However, due to the runaway success of this scholarship offer, we're going to be offering similar scholarship places elsewhere, starting with the August issue when *Hardwire* will be offering some free tuition at The Musicians' Academy in London. More on this excellent institution and how you can acquire a place there next month.



THE TEXT for the American press ad for the Yamaha QY10 goes like this: "Yamaha announces an eight-song, eight track sequencer with a 28-note polyphonic tone generator, 30 sampled instruments, 26 sampled drum sounds and 76 preset backing patterns, with MIDI in/out. And that's about the size of it."

It's a joke, of course. Yamaha have crammed all the above into something the size of a videocassette which sells for a paltry RRP of around £260, and I'd advise everyone to buy one before they come to their senses.

The QY10 is one of those things I've been dreaming about for years. Most musicians with any kind of interest in the evolution of instrument technology indulge in musings of the why-don't-they-invent-something-that-does-such-and-such kind. My pet fantasy has been along the following lines: given

that (a) there are plenty of cheap domestic keyboards around which offer sequencing facilities of sorts, (b) many musicians can't spend as much time as they'd like poring over their home studio set-ups and (c) it's occasionally wonderful to have a band which always plays exactly what you want to hear, shouldn't it be possible to design a little polyphonic tone generator with a built-in multitrack sequencer and a keyboard-like user interface which would enable you to compose, arrange and listen to your own music in those odd times and places (such as the 40-minute train journey from home to office, in my case) which are available? The QY10 is all this and more, at a price which is seriously cheap for a device which does so much.

Briefly, what you get is a small, rugged little box with a scattering of function buttons, a LCD display and a mini-keyboard which spans one octave but which is switchable through several. The box contains 30 PCM sampled instrument voices covering most of the instrumental spectrum, 26 percussion voices, and an eight-track sequencer. The sequencer, however, is a bit odd insofar as only four of the tracks have true sequencing capability in the sense that they can be programmed from beginning to end in real- or step-time with whatever information you like. The remaining four tracks are designated 'accompaniment' tracks, which have to be assembled from pre-existing patterns which exist as preprogrammed (and unerasable) chunks of memory, although there are 24 blank pattern slots within which you can create your own (erasable) patterns. As you might imagine, the accompaniment tracks are programmable in step-time only.

Anyway, you get the picture. The QY10 runs on penlight-size batteries and has a walkie-type headphone socket, offering the ultimate in portability. Other little refinements include MIDI in and out, enabling you to access the QY10's tone generator from other MIDI devices, programme the sequencer from an external keyboard and to bulk dump (fnarr fnarr) MIDI data from the QY10 to other compatible sequencers.

The QY10 could undoubtedly do for the musician what the Cambridge Z88 has done for the overworked journalist and what the Psion Organiser has done for, er, whoever uses one. For the time being, I'm tempted to take my review sample into hiding with me.

Finally, *The Wire* will be exhibiting at the International Music Show (Olympia, 10-14 July) again this year, so do drop by to engage us in appropriate banter, buy a T-shirt, renew your subscription, buy another T-shirt, tell us what you think of us and partake of the various other goodies we'll have for you.

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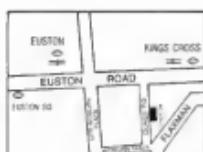
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let your fingers do the singing

The robots are coming! . . . Cyberphoners Kraftwerk are back with a new disc and a new UK tour. We sent Wire's talking typewriter Hoopy Glass to ask the almost lifelike Ralf, do androids dream of electric blips?

"Architecture in general is frozen music."

Friedrich von Schelling (1775/1854)

MUSIC TO live in. Music to travel through. Music as a mental map of the onrushing future, as we joystick through the ghostly green-image of cities that vanished centuries ago, or may never be built, as our feelings for and memories about unlived lives in unreal places tracked through us, impalpable but also irresistible: *we start to move, we break the glass . . .*

"To me," says Kraftwerk's Ralf Hutter, polite and precise as ever, laying his quietly forceful claim on everyone's technological present, "to me, music has *always* been Virtual Reality. I go into music and this is my space; so all this [he means, of course, the currently fashionable excitement for life in Cyberworld] comes as an additional force, sure. When you play 'Autobahn', or 'Trans-Europe', you can actually smell the burning tyres. You enter a different space. When you play 'Trans-Europe Express', you can actually travel through Europe. Virtually. Now with computer-generated images, you can extend that into graphics and visuals."

We wonder if this is true. We feel, nonetheless, as if we've been programmed to ask the next question. Do you, we ask, need visuals?

"At some point it's a reinforcing element, but it'll block the mind if it's the wrong program. For instance, you hear a record, you get into a virtual reality, and a week later you see a video. But if it's not compatible with your virtual reality, you lose something."

We've seen the future of rock'n'roll. In fact, we've been there, flying by in gleaming machines. Black music, turning itself inside out around the axis of a lifted melody in a curious near-novelty record almost a decade ago: Bambata's Soul Sonic Force, and "Planer Rock", suddenly up-ending everything we'd convinced ourselves we knew about African-American technologies of expression. After the saxophone and jazz, the electric guitar and R&B, the digital sampler—and HipHop and House. A transformed cultural landscape, where the lines from Darmstadt to the Boogie Down Bronx were, well, suddenly traceable.

"*Trans-Europe Express*," sang the stolen tune brightly. Learn a new language. Think everything through again. *Et in Nintendo ego, endless endless endless.*

THE DAY the robots came back to claim their place, we were taken by surprise. We'd been joking, after all, for a while now, about their absolute triumph everywhere, their pervasive underground effect gone suddenly pervasively overground. The absurd fact that the fab faceless four were suddenly (secretly) the *most influential group of all time*. Fact, because the record they were presumably currently working on was awaited with the same all-across-pop cargo-cult fervid anticipation that the next Beatles/Stones/Dylan product could always engender: waiting for postcards, down from the mountain, to order the next bit of your life by.

Absurd, because it's absurd. They're from Dusseldorf! What can they possibly know that we don't?

"I F," SAID Sam Phillips, of Chess studios, long ago, "I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars." Sam found Elvis.

"Kraftwerk were good," said Juan Atkins, known as Cybertron, not so long ago. "I thought if I could make them funky, I could take over the world." Juan, with Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson, founded Detroit Techno. The sound of colonnades and palaces, motorways and morsecode, in molten sensual soul-motion: and somewhere in the back of it, Ralf and Florian, this most unlikely inspiration. Postwar Germany and post-slavery black America, rebuilding culture from nothing, from ruins and darkness: and finding — against all expectation — some fragment of a shared universal language, a fantasy space they could both call home.

"We always tried to reduce," says Ralf. "To play the least possible notes. That's definitely one of our ideas (. . .) I think that's also a part of where we come from, in motion, where we play the minimal soundtrack, and you add the rest yourself, rather than that baroque overkill. Too many notes, that has to do with fear, when you're standing onstage, you trample on your keyboard, play ten notes with ten fingers, rather than one



note very quiet."

Examine their trick, and call it simple if you will. You didn't think of it. To cut the voices down to machine-mumbles, and to let the machines sing. They're only instruments, you're the motor. But as any player will no doubt tell you, sometimes an otherwise inanimate object lets you tell things you didn't know you knew.

"Sometimes you think of something ahead, and then you play it. That's one way of doing it. Then you play while you play; I have singing fingers, talking fingers. Florian has a talking typewriter. While you press the phonetics and the letters, you hear them; so, speaking typewriter . . .

"It's distorted from industrial product, part of a big Siemens computer from the old days, and Florian took it, and we persuaded a technician to modify it. That's the voice you hear on a lot of our records. I play mostly keyboards, plastic knobs, just black or white notes. There's nothing to it. As we go along, I sometimes don't know where it's coming from, and that's the best way I can explain it. It's nearly automatic, very relaxing and easy and the music is like a gift coming through your fingers. It doesn't happen all the time, and you have to work on it afterwards, edit it and so on. I'm aiming for an improvised situation with the computer."

ALWAYS BEFORE, a Kraftwerk LP arrived, and we listened and thought, yes, but . . . And in a week we were hooked, and invaded, and changed. Metal pod-people, waking

up to find ourselves absolutely the same and subtly theirs. On one level, *The Mix* only reworks old favourites: "Computerlove", "Autobahn", "Radioactivity", "Music Non Stop" . . . Smart move, too, in the face of impossibly high expectation — you can only change the world so often, and their obsessions have been taken up everywhere, developed beyond anyone's ability to keep up, by bedsit technicians in Chicago, Brussels, Osaka, Sheffield, Rio, Goa, wherever.

But this isn't the point. Their pre-eminence comes from having utterly grasped a fact of the modern studio world long before anyone else. The content of a Kraftwerk song has never been its tune or even its words, never the sheetmusic score that others could play. It was always the film it projected, or projected us into, the charged virtual space it created and let us loose in.

"Without loudspeakers," says Ralf, clarifying matters at least as obliquely as Kraftwerk's new record, "without loudspeakers, you wouldn't hear Kraftwerk. You couldn't play Kraftwerk on the piano. Notes make no sense."

Music to live in. Music to travel through. Music as an interactive use-model of the fiction-zones we conjure with, to keep us sane, mobile, smart and creatively spooked: *and at the fall of night, this city's made of light . . .*

"With Kraftwerk, notes are useless. You wouldn't be able to hear it."

Special thanks to Joe Savage and Bob Koff

MILTON NASCIMENTO



Txai - word in the language of the Kaxinawa Indians... adopted by Indians, rubber tappers and river people as a form of respect and caring for all those who are allies of the forest. Companion: the other half of me.

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real time

Jake Fordham remembers some vintage jazz vidi

Thelonious Monk

JAPAN/EUROPE
Charly Vidjazz 2

Anyone who ever saw Monk perform in person will watch this tape and feel like they're back in the seats again, and anybody who likes Monk's music but never saw him will be instantly hooked on the sight of the pianist's feet flapping frantically about as if AWOL from his brain and those fingers apparently curved in the opposite direction to the recommendations of any piano teacher who wants to stay in work.

A trio recording from 1957 – the year of Monk's emergence from neglect, and renewed vigour as a performer – reveals an animated, fervent style on a brisk, reverberating "Blue Monk". Unaccompanied, Monk is unexpectedly and movingly reflective on "Crepuscule With Nellie" and "Comin' On The Hudson", and some quartet material from Japan in 1963 delivers a hustling, spiky version of "Evidence", with the pianist's feet splaying at all angles, his solo full of jangles and clangs. Charlie Rouse is unremarkable here but Monk is delightful on "Just A Gigolo", with wry, mock-sentimental arpeggios and split notes, and unquenchable on and off the keyboard on "Bolivar Blues" – often lurching disconcertingly about behind an impassive Rouse, looking like a man trying to find his way home from the Dog & Duck at closing time.

Miles & Trane

Charly Vidjazz 3

Some well-known footage of Miles Davis and Gil Evans from a New York television studio in 1959, plus the Coltrane quintet at work in Germany in 1961 (including Eric Dolphy) and the Davis quintet of 1966 with Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams.

The 1959 session exclusively features Miles, as the orchestral records of the period did, on a version of "So What" including three of Evans's trombones, and full-scale accounts of Brubeck's "The Duke", Evans's beautiful "Blues For Pablo" and Ahmad Jamal's "New Rhumba". Davis's relaxed drive and use of space are fully operational throughout, though he's often more offhand and less intense than on the discs, and the



Duke Ellington photo by Val Winterton

poor sound quality plays havoc with the already fragile timbres of his playing.

The same problem arises with the Coltrane material, notably on Trane's soprano account of "Every Time We Say Goodbye" and Dolphy's flute is unsteadily engaged for most of "My Favourite Things". But seeing Coltrane and Dolphy together, as well as hearing McCoy Tyner (on "Every Time . . .") in his pre-messianic phase as a bristly bop pianist, is precious material.

The best technical quality (and some musical bollseys, like Wayne Shorter's whoops, squiggles and all-round originality of form) comes from the 1966 version of Davis's "Footprints", a stunning example of why this group was such a monument to collective inventiveness. The loosely-translated Italian notes turn Miles into a trombonist and modal notes improvising into "moral improvising".

Duke Ellington

MEMORIES OF DUKE

Warner Jazzmasters 8536 50187-3

By 1968, when most of this concert footage was recorded, Ellington's band was consigned to be past its best and resigned to a routine of airports and one-nighters that muffled its old majestic voice. But in personnel at least, it was unquestionably the last

authentic Ellington band that still reflected the light of an extraordinary past. Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope and Coorie Williams were still alive and fully functioning when this material from his 1968 Latin-American tour was filming.

But if old Ellington admirers weren't being surprised by new riches at this time, new ones were still knocked out by the fluidity, colour and enduring harmonic audacity in the ensembles, the trademark sounds of men like Hodges and Carney, and the wit and swing of the tunes. All that is still here (there are 15 pieces, including "Creole Love Call", "Satin Doll", "The Mooch", "Mood Indigo", "Take The A Train" and "Sophisticated Lady" plus a clever but unmemorable unrecorded new piece, "Mexican Suite"), and Ellington himself is on fine form at the piano.

Various

VINTAGE COLLECTION VOLS 1 & 2

Warner Jazzmasters 9031 74506-3/74507-3

Volume one features Basie, Red Allen, Monk, Jimmy Rushing, Billie Holiday and Jimmy Giuffre at the end of the 50s, volume two Ahmad Jamal, Ben Webster, Miles Davis and Gil Evans a little later. The Basie tracks – featuring Coleman Hawkins and

EDDYING FIGURES

by Bill Shoemaker

991 marks **Anthony Braxton's** silver anniversary in creative music. Only in his mid-40s, Braxton has a staggering oeuvre of 350 compositions and eight volumes of writings. This batch of recent releases, including reissues of two pivotal recordings, covers a contextual spectrum few composer/instrumentalists have examined; yet, it only represents a portion of Braxton's activities.

Braxton's solo alto saxophone music is well-represented by the double LP-only reissue of the once controversial *For Alto* (Delmark DS-4204/21: ★★★★), and 19 (Solo) Compositions, 1968 (New Albion NA 023 CD: 51:31 minutes: ★★★★). Though *For Alto* was only Braxton's second recording, his solo vocabulary of multiphonics, pointillistic intervals, and scalar lyricism was already in place. This set of breathy balladic fragments, streams of molten sound, and reconstituted blues elements has stood the test of time. It deserved a digital remastering to eliminate ghosting, as well as a CD issue, neither of which, unfortunately, Delmark provided.

The go-for-broke intensity on much of *Fo* appears to have been leavened by the years. While 19 Compositions can't be considered tame, it forwards a more burnished attack, generally shorter durations, and now-familiar materials. Maybe it's a sign of mellowing middle-age that even the Ayerlesque plasticity of "106A," the mutoponic densities of "119G," and the buzzing limbre of "118E" fit seamlessly into a program with the supple "138B," which is subtitled not with a descriptive "triplet dictation" or "inadic spiral," but with the evocative "African Voices."

While 19 (Solo) Compositions, 1988 is a recommended point of entry for newcomers to Braxton's solo music, Performance (Quartet) 1979 (hat ART CD 6044, 71.13, ★★★★★) and Eight (+3) Ristano Compositions 1985 (hat ART CD 6052, 74.56, ★★★★★) serve the same function for, respectively, Braxton's quartet music and his work "In the tradition." Performance is a concert excursion through some of Braxton's most robust, witty, and colorful compositions from the '70s. The exuberant virtuosity and humor of trombonist Ray Anderson, the pyrotechnics of percussionist Thurman Barker, and the fluent bass of John Lindberg spurred Braxton on at every turn, resulting in a case-in-point for concert recordings.

In a word, the Tristano set, a tribute to Weimar Marsh, is not Tristano's compositions are particularly fitting vehicles for Braxton, as their serpentine lines are akin to Braxton's more rococo quartet pieces. But, Braxton transforms these compositions with a palpable emotionalism and a rousing rhythmic drive. His cohorts are equally inspired: Rova's baritonist John Ruskin revels in the idiom, pianist Died Scott's extraordinary debut is marked by quicksilver solos and two-fisted comping, and Cecil McBee and Andrew Cyrille are there typically masterful selves. This is the best of Braxton's jazz repertoire recordings.

Seven Compositions (Triol) 1989 (hat ART)

CD 6025; 58:21. ★★★★) is built upon the fluid, conversational interaction between Braxton, drummer Tony Oxley, and bassist Adelhardt Roedings. The program of Braxton pieces, mainly from his quartet book, a "post-strophic" Oxley original, and a ruminaging of "All The Things You Are," has a loose, simmering feel, due, in large part, to the non-stop patter of Oxley, a Euro-pioneer in propelling an ensemble with coloration and microscopic detail. Though it is titled Seven Compositions, this program really showcases Braxton the impro-

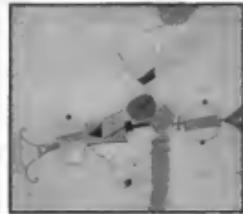
The piano has a strong, important role in Braxton's musical evolution—his first catalogued composition is for solo piano, and he reportedly plays in a fluent, transmogrified lounge style. Compositions 99, 101, 107 & 139 (hat ART CD 6019; 68:30. ★★★★) and *⑧ Duets* Vancouver 1989 (Music & Arts CD 611; 45:27. ★★★★) feature exceptional performances by, respectively, Mananare Schroeder and Marilyn Crispell. Schroeder's reading of "139" reveals Braxton's notated pieces for solo piano to have a fully-realized, post-sensual identity, flush with eddying figures and surprising shifts in mood and texture; her authoritative presence is also felt in duet with Braxton ("101"), and in their trio with trombonist Garrett List ("107").

Cispell ups the ante in her approach to Braxton's music, as her gifts as a composer/improvisor, combined with her bracing, conservatory-correct technique, account for a command of Braxton's music that no other pianist has as consistently demonstrated. Her piece-setting performance on the non-stop *Duels* Vancouver 1989 has a palpable energy, its quality that prompts occasional comparisons to Cecil Taylor, but, throughout this program, Cispell's motivic orientation and tactical use of clusters, crossovers, and percussive octaves are clearly her own.

Braxton's tenure at Mills College created a proximity to the members of Rova that resulted in two contrasting CDs: a powerful program with the entire quartet, *The Aggregate* (Sound Aspects SAS CD 023; 69:03; ★★★★★), and a more low-keyed encounter with now-former Rova altoist Andrew Voigt, *Kai Nidre* (Sound Aspects SAS CD 031; 35:10; ★★★★). Clocking in at 46:13, "129" is a huge canvas of bristling structures, animated and sustained by Braxton and Rova's brinkmanship; the full force of Braxton and Rova is room-rattling. Braxton contributed the lively, post-bop "85" and the plaint "87" (both conceived as woodwind/bass duets) to the date with Voigt, who more than holds his own.

Finally, the LP-only *Ensemble* (Victorville) 1968 (Victor 07: 41:19 ★★★★) documents the unique benefits and pitfalls of assembling an ensemble of international figures for a one-time only festival appearance. You can't go wrong with the likes of saxophonist Evan Parker, trombonist George Lewis, trumpeter Paul Smoker, vibist Bobby Naughton, bassist Joelle Leandre, and drummer Gerry Hemingway—their individual strengths carry the elastic reading of "141"; yet, "142" seems like a rough edit. Had Braxton the same rehearsal opportunities with this ensemble as he had with Rova, however, the results would have been legendary. (reviewed on CD except where noted) DB

expect the unexpected



ANTHONY BRAXTON
PERFORMANCE (QUARTET) 1979



JOEL WARNE MARSH



ANTHONY BRAXTON
SEVEN COMPOSITIONS (TRIO) 1989



卷之三

Part A-B: A WORK IN PROGRESS

The production has been made possible
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real time

Gerry Mulligan as TV Special extras – are OK if standard gallops through blues, but most of the other material on volume one is invaluable.

Henry 'Red' Allen, an ingenuous trumpeter with a New Orleans player's devices but many covert modern conceptions of form, rattles his way through two forays into tight small-band swing with "Wild Man Blues" and "Rosetta", and almost as attractive as Allen's infectious slurs, vibrato and sidelining phrasing is Pee Wee Russell's innately eccentric clarinet sound. The same version of "Blue Monk" as appears on the *VadJazz* series is included here, and an exquisite exploration of "The Train And The River" by Jimmy Gaufré, Jim Hall on guitar and an uncredited bassist – presumably Ralph Pena.

But the real magic moments of the tape belong to Billie Holiday and Lester Young. Both of them recorded many more subtle, resourceful and surprising blues together than this version of "Frost And Mellow" but Holiday's mixture of gravelly defiance and resignation, and Young's almost-frozen de-

livery of barely a handful of notes that still have that old evaporating tone (Lady Day's expression of tenderness as he does it hoards on being musical itself) is an ambiguous high-spot of the tape.

Half of volume two consists of Miles's "So What", "The Duke" and other pieces from the Gil Evans TV session and a good jaunty Ben Webster soaring with some basic alumnus, but the Ahmad Jamal trio on "Darn That Dream" and "Ahmad's Blues" emphasise not only how extraordinary it is that Jamal wasn't recognised as a massive talent before but how uncannily his group sounds like a miniature version of the Miles Davis mid-50s group it helped inspire – in its dynamic contrasts, delicate, dancing rouch, padding chords and sudden flaring runs.

Stan Getz

VINTAGE COLLECTION VOLS 1 & 2
Warner Jazz/Warner 9031 74308-3/74509-3

The tag 'Vintage Collection' and the fact that much of Warner's other material in this

series dates from the 50s and 60s might mislead you into believing this is earlier Getz than it is. It's two halves of an outdoor show in California in 1983, with Getz's excellent quartet featuring Jim McNeely on piano, Marc Johnson on bass and Vicente Lewis on drums – but for admirers of more romantic Getz this is an all-purpose 80s post-bop band with its complex, clattery polyrhythms, modal episodes, and more explicit emphasis on hyperactive virtuosity.

Volume two is the stronger, with the saxophonist both capturing his reflective quality and settling into a manner of playing fast material that bounces off the rhythm section rather than trying to outgun it, and also exploring superior material, notably from Jobim and Strayhorn. Volume one is largely devoted to Jim McNeely's pieces, with Getz uneasily speedy, a problem that also surfaces on "Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most" where he plays fast, empty arpeggio fill-ins to spaces he would shrewdly leave empty in more relaxed moods.

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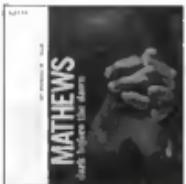
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LAST RITES

In the final decade of his life, Stravinsky re-conducted all of his major works for the Columbia label.

Sony have now issued these historic recordings in a 12-volume, 22-CD set,

prompting Mark Sinker to survey the legacy of "the first composer to exploit the metaphysical implications of the gramophone"!

THE BANG is in Stravinsky's auto-biography, written in the mid-30s, an amused note: a comment from that egregious crowd-pleaser and master-technician Richard Strauss, to the effect that *The Firebird* should have begun not pianissimo, but with a loud bang, after which the public would follow the music wherever it went. Because the bang came. And from *The Rite Of Spring* onwards – although this loudest bang in 20th Century music also begins quietly – Stravinsky really did do just what he wanted. And even though his public never let him forget the beginning which they instantly hated and afterwards always loved, they followed.

Born a year before Wagner died, he was not only still alive and composing, but still conducting, the year the Beatles put out *Revolver*. What's more, more than either, he was quite uncannily aware of himself as a PopCult icon and item for sale, the "modern" composer, intensely sensitive to the ways in which success distorted what an artist thinks he's up to. In some ways, his entire career – apparently as populist as Strauss's – is actually geared to short-circuiting false expectations.

This pioneering project, though, was his biggest hedge against future misinterpretation: the complete recordings, on one label (then Columbia, now Sony), of a classical composer's works *as conducted by the composer*. Nearly 24 hours of music, recorded almost without exception in his last working decade, it provides an unusual opportunity to examine a composer's work, if not "objectively", then at least in his own considered hindsight. He was, it seems, the first composer to understand and then *exploit* both the practical and the metaphysical implications of the gramophone.

THE BANG itself – the Stravinsky everyone knows – appears on the first three-disc set, *Ballets Vol 1* (SM3K 46291): *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *Rite*, *The Wedding*, *Reward*, and *The Soldier's Tale*. *Firebird*, that never-so-attensely-florid-again fairytale of a piece (which began to bounce him out of the 19th Century into stabbing anti-harmony vocalists), is more acidly rendered than usual, setting the tone for the old composer's remake of his younger self.

True to intention at the original concept-moment? Almost certainly not. He's getting himself up to speed quicker than he

did first time round: what's important here is what he wanted everyone to hear that he thinks they missed. *Petrushka* famously alchemises 'florid' into something never quite chased up: the Medieval Russian Country Fair as carnival babble. Anticipating from 50 years in the future, Stravinsky in 1960 emphasises instead the fabulist-archaic.

Rite next: and if this is the only time an older, slyer dog actually undersells a young wilder one, the results are all the more fascinating. This work, says Boulez, has "attained a dimension quite beyond its point of departure; it has become the ritual – and the myth – of modern music". Which could be read as envy – but its composer, fed up with its myth, and concerned to unify his work where others see rupture and disjunction, wants it to play as just another bit of Stravinsky. Austere, controlled, precise, an orchestra, not a mutating monster: glimpses of the layered detail he wishes he'd insisted on, retroactively tamping down the barbaously compelling fun/fear the piece sometimes runs to (root idea, remember: in front of the tribal elders, a virgin dances herself to death).

The Wedding: at which point critics – protecting their interests – start saying things like "ironic mockery", the most revealing thing about Stravinsky's back-page adjustments may be how very like *Rite* he's able to render this work – even though it's for voice chorus, random/banal conversation fragments and backed by percussion ensemble. He also at times invoked the "mockery" thing, taking himself for a premature post-modernist before he actually became one: but listen here, and hear that for the smokescreen it is. *Wedding* is modernism the way Joyce wanted it defined, saying ordinary folks' ordinary lives and choices are godlike, epic, mythic, heroic, tragic subjects also: next-door's kid's marriage as an eternal ritual of sacrificed virgins?

Reward and *Soldier* are as cheerfully, muddetously slapstick as the folk-tales they grow out of: the composer is honing his music to its bony essence, his resources war-years thin (*Soldier* is a seep): From here on he'll be digging through almost every overlooked era of art-music past and present, trying each time to condense similar energy out of it. Harmony, he said, bored him – counterpoint he loves, but finds easy. The path never followed – *Petrushka*'s carnival babble – is in a way



dispersed over a wider and wider range of historical styles, as he trawls for any structure that can keep his attention.

TH E **N****E****X****T** three-disc set – *Ballets Vol 2* (SM3K 46292) – makes the point instantly. It's a hodge-podge, as strong or as stupid as the archetype of the era he's raiding: *Palomella*, for example – his first "neoclassical" venture – is repro Pergolesi, his decisively controversial step out of any contemporary philosophy of music's sense of linear/historical development. Which is controversial because it implicitly rejected expressionism, romanticism and 19th Century ideas of progress: and because it said that art-music is absolutely as acceptable a source of theft-inspiration and/or satire as folk-melody or jazz.

But a hodge-podge can still affect the way you hear – deep content emerging through juxtaposition, and so on. Although all sets after the first are totally unchronological, this does after all fit in with Stravinsky's project: constructing a universal music out of the merely historical. What, you might ask, do *Apollon* and *Agow* have in common, to run next to each other (when the first was composed in 1928 and the second in 1954)?: the answer, that both deal with elemental Greek concepts, "art-as-order" and "struggle", is a little more substantial than others that spring to mind (both begin with 'A', both by Stravinsky, etc). Although one refers back to French music in the 17th Century, while the other mixes tonal with Webernian serialism, both are examinations of ancient and modern "classicism", and how they play among themselves.

His trips to the past are never simply sentimental journeys – in fact, his astringent de-prettyfying is a forefather of the scrape-and-grind of today's Authentic Instruments movement. All the same, this second set does make it hard to avoid wondering if he didn't also embrace neo-classicism in order still to be able to compose work of extended length: because while the logistics and money-led demands of the concert-programme industry still largely required length, the energy of the Bang-era was basically unleashed through intensified economy of means. Stravinsky was never a man to disappoint his public in this sense (he did better when ballet was both popular and profitable): between the wars, it's sadly the fact that compositions which were really no more substantial than technical exercises, fail because of unnecessary length.

The volume of *Minature Masterpieces* (SMK 46296) is no help here, except perhaps to prove that he still thinks of shortform as trivial (disc one begins with "Greeting Prelude", basically a singing Happy Birthday telegram, and disc two with "Circus Polka", a dance for a troupe of elephants). Clearer signals come from the two volumes dedicated to those most revered of extended orchestral forms, the symphony and the concerto – precisely because Stravinsky is struggling with pro-forma Great Composer requirements, and his whole intellect isn't quite engaged. He knows they're dead, but practicalities won't let him admit it.

The *Symphonies* two-disc set (SM2K 46294) includes his *Op 1* (which he had doubts about from the moment Glazunov came

up to him to say the Russian equivalent of "Nice, very nice") and the 1939 *Symphony In C*, a tart but characterless Haydn/Mozart-retread. More significantly, it contains the *Symphony In Three Movements*, his "War Symphony" (the closest he ever came to an explicit commentary-in-music on current events) and the *Symphony Of Psalms*, his first large-scale religious work (written in 1930, revised 1948).

Symphony In Three Movements is something of a return to richness: in fact, it half-quotes *Rite*, perhaps in apologetic allusion to Nazism. This is its weakness: if it seems somehow *clunky* at times, it's because the orchestral manoeuvres he loved, and does best – ferocious ostinati, bony timbral contrasts – are ones which "represent" social and political facts he loathes. He's turning his sensibilities inside out.

The *Concerto* single-disc set (SMK 46295) contains the *Concerto For Piano & Wind Instruments* and its milder-mannered sibling the *Capriccio For Piano & Orchestra*. These were vehicles during the 20s for Stravinsky to exercise his considerable pianistic technique in public; beyond further, now unremarkable, experiment with timbral combination, they tell you little that couldn't be gleaned from the fact that all his works began life on the piano (though they do provide the best ever Stravinsky anecdote, when the reflection of his fingers in the piano lid drove all memory of his music out of his head mid-concert, so that conductor Serge Koussevitsky had to whisper the next passage to him). The *Cowerto For Violin & Orchestra* is a violin concerto – Isaac Stern the violinist – for people who don't particularly like violin concertos (which he didn't); so that the only essential piece here is *Movements For Piano And Orchestra* (piano Charles Rosen), which dates from after his discovery of Webern's near-motionless serial miniaturism.

With hindsight, the fact that Webern's work almost totally televised his drive to austerity of means has lead to much busy unearthing of pre-echoes in early work. In terms of relative bulk, the two-disc *Operas* set (SM2K 46298, including "The Nightingale", "Mavra" and the 35 songs he wrote) quite fairly demonstrates why they'd till then stayed buried: perhaps ten of the songs – the *Three Japanese Lyrics*, *Pribiashki*, and *Cat's Cradle Songs* (the last two sung here by the great Cathy Berberian) – genuinely prefigure the weird, momentary delicacy of his serial period. But beside such big works as "The Nightingale" (which is anyway early), "Mavra" (which replays Glinkin and Tchaikovsky), and *The Rake's Progress* (which takes up its own two-disc set, SM2K 46299) this early group of songs, along with the *Three Songs From William Shakespeare, In Memoriam Dylan Thomas* from his serial period, and the (very late) *For J.F.K.* are tiny treasures in a welter of the relentlessly middleweight. *Rake* in particular can't escape this criticism, however sharply performed: written at a time when the whole idea of modern opera as a form was in doubt, its backward-looking strategies – to the time of Gluck – seem to admit defeat. Even the collaboration with W H Auden on the libretto smacks more of arts-pages *Late Show* pandering than

continues on page 70

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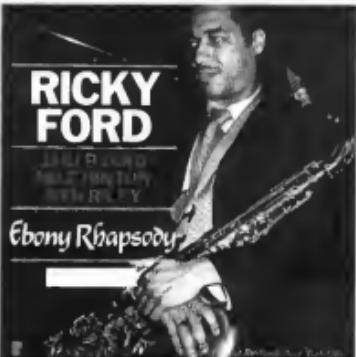
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Let 'em roll! Brooke Auchincloss-Foreman takes a joyride
through a new collection of classic Blue Note album sleeves

The Cover Art Of Blue Note Records

BY GRAHAM MARSH, GLYNN CALLINGHAM,
FELIX CROMLEY
Collins & Brown, £16

DESIGNER REID Miles joined Blue Note in 1956. During the next 11 years his design – a mixture of Russian constructivism meets jumpin' jive – became synonymous with the stylish sounds of the Blue Note label.

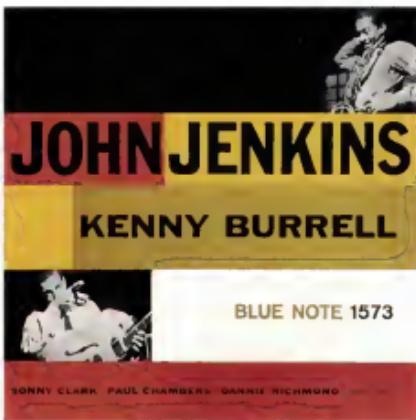
The Cover Art Of Blue Note Records is not only a collection of excellent and rare sleeve designs but also a picture of design in the late 50s and early 60s: from the bold type and blocks of solid colour of Sonny Rollins to the quirky camera angles and random type shapes of Stanley Turetzky's *Joyride*.

Like the music of Blue Note, the covers have a distinctive flavour. Reid's 500 covers for the label consistently broke the boundaries of sleeve design and set a standard that is still imitated today by designers in all fields (and even directly copied by artists such as Joe Jackson and Elvis Costello).

Whether you are a designer, or a jazz fan, or neither, these sleeves are timeless and beautiful to look at and well worth £16.00

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"JOYRIDE"

STANLEY TURETZKY

ARRANGED AND CONDUCTED BY OLIVER NELSON

BLP 4200



A CADDY FOR DADDY

Pop star Natalie Cole has recorded a tribute album to her jazz-singer father. Mike Fish discovers that Nat wasn't such a 'King' on the golf course!

Photo by Platon Antoniou

"BECAUSE," SAYS Natalie Cole, "I got totally disillusioned and disillusioned with pop music."

Now there's something we can all relate to. Even if she does qualify it with "At least, what was coming my way". She is reflecting on the genesis of her new record *Unforgettable*, a collection of songs associated with her father Nat, and performed in a manner that has rather more in common with the senior Cole's way of music-making than that of his daughter's recent output. Ms Cole revived a somewhat flagging pop career with a hit version of Bruce Springsteen's "Pink Cadillac", but she seemed stuck in a repeating groove of middleweight pop-soul records that weren't going anywhere.

"I was and still am basically disillusioned with the quality of a lot of music. For us in the States, things are pretty redundant. People keep asking me now, are you giving up your pop career? No. It's a good career. But it gets a little boring sometimes. When you have 200 other people doing what you're doing, it gets a little, like . . . I think I'll go and do something else!"

It's arguable that turning to Nat's music as an alternative is a convenient bolt-hole, but there could hardly be anyone with better credentials to do it: she sang with her father on stage at 11, and has access to a family archive of many unreleased Nat Cole tunes. Her brother Kelly and herself sifted through the huge number of his recordings to pick the programme for *Unforgettable*, and they've chosen a neat balance between the light R&B material of the Trio days and the grand and well-spoken songs which Nat could glide through almost without trying. It seems as if hardly anyone since has touched "That Sunday, That Summer", for instance.

"Oh, my favourite. I remember when I first heard that one — I said to myself, this song is so unlike my father, because of this vision I had in my head of a horse-drawn carriage and taking a lady in a bonnet for a picnic — it's like a period song. But I loved the way the lyrics and the music worked together."

Did she study any of her father's records for guidance?

"One or two. 'Thou Swell', the phrasing on that is very tricky, and on some of the fast ones, like 'Avalon'. 'Straighten Up And Fly Right' was a breeze. Most of them came kind of natural."

THE RECORD sounds carefully-worked, not particularly natural. But it's far from the charmless effort it might have turned out to be. The younger Cole is a contemporary pop singer, after all, not the jazz-trained crooner of a generation before, and pop vocalists have a habit of coming a cropper on Broadway tunes: Linda Ronstadt's collaborations with Nelson Riddle are a notorious case of a singer getting it wrong almost from bar one (and still finding most of her audience enchanted by it).

Natalie's way with the material is much gentler than that. She doesn't have a huge voice, but she knows how to inject drama into a ballad and fun into a swing tune, and there's an unassuming quality about the set which has its own appeal. Some of the interpretations are a little too pasty — "Route 66" comes out as mere fluff — and the orchestrations are sometimes a mite too bland, as if the arrangers were afraid to overwhelm the singer out front. Whatever the likes of Riddle and Gordon Jenkins and Billy May were, they weren't bland.

Some may find the closing title track, where Natalie duets with the voice of her father, a shameless piece of schmaltz, though she sings it with enough of a smile in her voice to make it seem peculiarly like a shared family joke.

"He was real easy to be with. Whenever there was a lull in his touring, that's when he was home, and that was the best time for all of us. He liked to play golf, and I was his caddy — I chased balls all over the place, because he wasn't a very good golfer. He liked cars, and he liked to drive fast, so my mother wouldn't drive with him! He liked to laugh. I remember he took my brother and I to the movies once, and it was a real funny movie, and he laughed so much and so hard that I just sat and looked at him. Watching him laugh was something I didn't get to see so often. A real regular and sweet guy."

When she was 11, Natalie sang Ella Fitzgerald's "Undecided" to her father, "with all the little inflections and everything", and he gave her a job singing a duet with him in one of his shows, "It's A Boe", the tune Louis Jordan and Maurice Chevalier do in *Gigi*. It's close to 30 years later. The daughter became a singer too, and her solicitous manager stands at her shoulder and asks, "You want some orange juice, Nat?" *



heavy metal bebop brother

From the Brecker Brothers to Steps to Sticks star on Paul Simon's

Rhythm Of The Saints tour,

*Michael Brecker is now one of the world's most successful
and accomplished tenor saxophonists.*

Tony Herrington bears about his hero's heroes,

from John Coltrane to MC Escher. Photo by Andra Nelki

THE FOLLOWING conversation with Michael Brecker was recorded in May during the Manchester leg of Paul Simon's *Rhythm Of The Saints* World Tour. The 42-year-old saxophonist was being billed as the tour's featured soloist and, reportedly, being paid \$5000 a night for the privilege.

The interview took place in Michael's rather palatial suite at the city's Midland hotel. It lasted half an hour before an errant fire alarm forced us to evacuate the building (Michael rescued his saxophone). After much hanging around on pavements with the rest of the hotel's staff and guests (including a bemused Paul Simon) we eventually concluded the interview in a nearby bar.

Michael Brecker was born in Philadelphia on 29 March 1949. Today he is widely regarded as the most influential tenor saxophonist in contemporary music since John Coltrane. The following might uncover something of what happened in between.

You've been involved in music seriously since the late 60s but you only recorded your first solo album in 1987. Why?
There are a number of reasons. One, I never had an ultimate goal of making my own records. It didn't seem important to me early on in my career. During the 70s and 80s I recorded six albums with The Brecker Brothers and six with Steps and Steps Ahead. They weren't solo albums but they were records in which I had a high degree of artistic and creative input, so that kind of filled any vacuum in that respect. But when Impulse made me an offer in 1987 it was too attractive to turn

down. Particularly in view of the label's history, what with all those Coltrane and McCoy Tyner records that I grew up with.

It's funny. When I actually came to think about making that first record I realised I didn't have any real ambitions or designs for it, other than to try and make an album that would combine my feelings about music at that time with something that wouldn't date too quickly. The records I enjoy the most are the ones that bear repeated listening. I've tried to achieve that same quality on all of my records.

You've recorded three solo albums, Mike Brecker, Don't Try This At Home and Now You See It . . . Now You Don't. What do you see as the main differences between them?

Don't Try This At Home was an attempt to expand on some of the ideas on the first record, which was basically an acoustic jazz date with few structural impediments. *Now You See It* was based on a slightly different concept which emerged from the record's first tune, "Escher Sketch".

For the past two or three years I've been hearing music mostly in terms of polyrhythms. I've been trying to write things that included two or more tempos at once. "Escher Sketch" is in two rhythms, 6/4 against 4/4. The two rhythms are played in different tempos with different feels. It gives the listener a choice, you can hear it one way or another way or both ways. If you're able to hear it both ways it becomes quite three dimensional. After I'd written it I saw it as an aural representation of something M C Escher might have portrayed in one of his lithographs.

That's how this particular tune was written. In turn, the



M. BRECK

concept influenced the rhythmic basis for several of the album's other compositions. Rhythm has always been the essential thing for me. Notes are more for decoration.

Swing as you mentioned rhythm, you're over here as part of Paul Simon's Rhythm Of The Saints tour. How did you get involved in that?

Paul asked me to play on the album. In the process of working on that, writing horn parts and my own solos, I fell in love with the music. As I got more involved Paul asked me to join the group for the tour. He said he'd give me time in the show to perform some of my own music. That sounded attractive to me.

Initially it was scary, playing to audiences of 10,000, and usually audiences unfamiliar with jazz or even instrumental music. But I've worked quite hard at it. I've had to rearrange the music quite a lot to make it more dynamic for the size of venue we're playing in but it seems to be working because I've been able to win the audience over every night.

Outside of that, and getting back to this question of rhythm, the experience of working with West African and Brazilian musicians has been very illuminating. I'm kind of a student right now. I bug the hell out of the African guys because I ask them questions all the time. But they've been very patient and gracious with me. They've taught me all kinds of things. Rhythmically speaking I'm still trying to absorb most of it but even now I can hear how the tune I'm doing in the show has evolved into a heavy six over eight West African type thing. Once I begin to get a fuller understanding of the various rhythms and their relationship to each other it's going to have a profound effect on my own music. I can hear it happening already just with what's going on inside my head. *Being involved in such a wide variety of playing situations over a long period, was it difficult for you to develop a specific identity on the saxophone?*

Not really, because even doing session work I was usually required to just play. I was able to fit my own personal conception to whatever playing situation I found myself in. And I've always been fairly adaptable as a saxophonist anyway, even when I was coming up I was playing soul, funk, R&B and rock as well as jazz.

But as far as developing an identity on the saxophone, it's not something I've spent a lot of time thinking about. If it's happened at all it's happened naturally. At first you listen to other players, you might borrow some concepts of tonality and phrasing from them but if you're good it's going to come out sounding different anyway. I imagine that's how my own voice has developed.

Can you tell me a little bit about your background? For instance, growing up in Philadelphia?

My father was a jazz pianist and an attorney, in the opposite order, so there was always music in the house. I remember listening to Charlie Parker, Paul Desmond and Clifford Brown a lot. The first solo I learned was by Jimmy Giuffre on a Shorty Rogers record — I was probably eight or nine at the time. We

had a family band, me, my brother Randy and my sister. We used to play after dinner, that became the custom.

I was exposed to a lot of different influences at that time. Philly was a very musical town then, people like Grover Washington Jr and Shirley Scott lived there, Miles and Art Blakey would pass through, then there'd be all the soul and R&B guys. It was in high school that I switched to playing the saxophone but there was a period when I gave up music completely, I wanted to be a basketball player. But then I heard Coltrane and that was enough for me to be totally grabbed by music again.

What was it about his music that attracted you?

Well, initially I didn't like it. The first record I got was *Live At Birdland* and it took me months to get into it. I thought the drums were too loud. I didn't understand what Coltrane was playing. But I continued to listen. At the same time I met a drummer called Eric Gravatt who was later to join Weather Report. He started to explain about Coltrane's conception and we began playing together as a duo. Eric became an enormous influence on me and I fell head over heels for Coltrane and the quartet from then on.

A little later, in '65 or '66, I got to see him play live. I actually went to see him twice but I got thrown out the first time. There was a tremendous amount of racial tension in Philadelphia at that point. Stokely Carmichael had spoken at this particular venue in North Philly the night before Trane was due to play there. I remember reading in the papers that the photographers had been thrown out. I went down the next night and I was the only white person there. Before the group came on I was approached by the organising committee and asked to leave. They said Trane had come back to his home town to play for the black community. So I left.

I was scared and disappointed but I understood. And Trane came back a week later to play at a different venue so I did get to see him eventually. It was an experience that I won't forget in a hurry.

You moved to New York City in 1969. What was that like? Very exciting. The late 60s and early 70s were a wonderful time to be in New York if you were involved in music. That was a period when musicians were experimenting with bringing different musical forces together. I got involved with that idea early on in a group called Bittsong. We were borrowing elements from jazz in terms of the harmonies and applying them to funk rhythms. It was very exhilarating.

When that group broke up we formed Dreams with myself, Randy, Billy Cobham, Don Grolnick and John Abercrombie. The music was pretty much the same as before, extensive jazz improvisation with a lot of heavy R&B under it.

Soon after that The Brecker Brothers came into being. That was an off-shoot of a couple of things. Randy had been writing very prolifically over a two-year period, great songs, very unique and creative. Also, just for fun, we'd been jamming once a week with Dave Sanborn, Chris Parker and Will Lee over at Don's apartment in Manhattan. At that point Randy

continues on page 70



David Sanborn

another Hand

"I'M REAL EXCITED about this record, and I'm thrilled to have the calibre of musicians participating that I do." *David Sanborn*

David Sanborn brings his unmistakable sound to a jazz recording made with the participation of such legends as drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Charlie Haden, guitarists Bill Frisell and Marc Ribot, and keyboardist Terry Adams.

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BOOM BOOM YEARS

With the release of *The Healer*, John Lee Hooker

became the first bluesman to score a worldwide pop hit.

Phil McNeill gives the godfather of delta boogie a full examination

and prescribes a choice dosage of recordings from his 40-year career.

Photo by David Redfern

If KEVIN COSTNER ever decides to do for the Mississippi cotton pickers what he did for the native Americans in *Dances With Wolves*, it will look something like this.

A sumptuously idealised beat-up sharecropper's shack, the sun dappling down through the trees. A little black girl in a dazzling white frock twirls an umbrella in the yard and there, on the porch, sits an old blues singer. The gnarly gent looks very dapper in his snapbrim hat and smart black suit, a red rose teetering from his buttonhole; as he stamps his foot in a severe, inexorable beat and snags his long, steely fingers against the metal strings of his big semi-acoustic guitar. The sound that rings out from the amplifier by the old man's side is the pulse of some mysterious African-American tribal memory, and then, like Costner's wolf, John Lee Hooker closes his eyes and moans an awesome, wordless song . . .

"Around the world," says the voice-over, "four million hearts rely on ICI pharmaceuticals. World problems. World solutions. World class."

That wonderful ICI ad, made a couple of years ago near New Orleans, is by no means the only manifestation of the most venerable living bluesman on our screens of late. Switch over to MTV, and chances are you'll catch the same dapper little old man making the same wordless moans on one of MTV's most-played videos of the past year, "The Healer" by Hooker and Carlos Santana — the title track from Hooker's star-studded Grammy-winning gold album.

Switch again, and you might catch an excerpt from Dennis Hopper's heat-and-lust film noir, *The Hot Spot*. As Don Johnson drifts into town and temptation, there's that same wordless moan simmering in the background like a steaming sidewalk.

Switch again, and here's an *Arena* profile of Van Morrison, revisiting the icons of his youth — Bob Dylan, The Chieftains and, out in a Louisiana swamp, thudding his black boot into the boards of a wooden jetty, it's that same old man bringing forth that same black, black, ancient voice.

JOHN LEE HOOKER is the Godfather of the blues, the last remaining conduit back to its elemental roots. In a way, that's his natural role: his music has always defied rational analysis;

more than any other post-war blues giant, his muse was pure, untutored soul.

Yet his position at the centre of things has really come by default — to be blunt, because Muddy Waters is dead. Although always immensely popular right from the moment his first record was released in 1948, Hooker was a maverick, outside of the mainstream. In a Magnificent Seven bluesmen, where Muddy Waters would be the ringleader and Howlin' Wolf and BB King the henchmen — the Brynner, Coburn and McQueen of the posse — Hooker would have to be Charlie Bronson, a man with a brooding self-containment, unfathomable and somehow foreign, the loner.

And, like Bronson, it's Hooker who has had the last laugh. His sheer presence has made him one of the most bankable singers in the world, his every cameo appearance pure gold. At the age of 73, Bronson has become Brando.

The Godfather's new house is "not a big, big house . . . but it's a beautiful house, very beautiful. Hot tubs, satellite dish, air conditioning, very lovely neighbourhood — I love it very much. I've still got the other. I go from house to house, I've got two houses."

"The Lord was very good to me the last year. *The Healer* was a very good record, and we got this other good one coming."

This other good one has a working title of *Mr Lucky*. It was recorded in Frisco and Sausalito, so the house in Vallejo probably came in handy. Where the first LP featured Bonnie Raitt, Robert Cray, Carlos Santana, Los Lobos, George Thorogood, Charlie Musselwhite and Canned Heat, this one has contributions from Cray, Van Morrison, Keith Richards, John Hammond, Albert Collins . . .

"And Carlos again," says Hooker. "We just finished yesterday: two songs, one called 'Strip Me Naked'. It's like you go to court, you know, and the woman take everything you got: oh, she stripped me naked!"

And recording with Richards, how did that turn out?

"Very good. I did a number with him called 'The Crawling King Snake'. It's me and Keith playing guitar, and bass and drums. Nobody famous. He's a very lovely person. I been knowing him a long, long time."

Life these days is good to John Lee Hooker, and he knows it.



"Forty years, the Lord been good to me." His son Robert, who used to play organ in his band, has become a minister, but "I got a daughter, she got a little band. Raquel Hooker – she sounds like Billie Holiday. I'm playing with her Saturday night, not too far from here. I'm a guest of hers."

JOHN LEE Hooker was brought up on a farm near Clarksdale, Mississippi, where he was born on 22 December, 1917. Thirty years later he made his first record and immediately became a star, at least in the so-called 'race' market.

By the time he cut "Boogie Chilien" in 1948, John Lee Hooker had been playing the blues half his life, and he went into the studio fully formed as an artist. How he reached that point we don't really know. One of the rare clues to Hooker's influences is, in fact, that song he's just recorded with Keith Richards: "Crawling King Snake" is one of several songs he learned from a little-known singer called Tony Hollins.

Here's how Hooker recalls his youth in "That's My Story", from the LP of the same name:

"When I first started travellin', I left home when I was young/I left old Mississippi, made my first stop in Memphis, Tennessee/I worked in Memphis, Tennessee down at the New Daisy picture show/I was only 14 years old when I hit the road/I wasn't making much money, I work all day, play my guitar at night/Then I left that town when I was 17 years old/I came to Cincinnati, I stayed there two long years, I didn't get no breaks/I came down to Detroit, Michigan/I got my start in Detroit, I bin there ever since/That's my story, that's my story of my life/I had a hard time . . ."

Hooker was one of 11 children. He learned guitar from his stepfather, William Moore, at about 12, and has said that he met Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake and Charley Patton in his own home. After singing in spiritual groups in Clarksdale, he ran away to Memphis, following a trail set by many other migrant bluesmen. There he lived with an aunt and worked as an usher in the New Daisy Theatre on Beale Street, busking in the bars at night.

Moving on ever northwards to Cincinnati, Ohio, he lived with another aunt – and ushered in another theatre! But in 1943 he finally made the big move to the northern industrial heartland of Detroit, where he worked at the Ford and Dodge motor factories and played the bars both solo and with a band. One night in 1948, at a club called the Sensation, Hooker was espied by local record shop owner Elmer Barbee, who invited him back to his store on Lafayette Street and helped him make a demo acetate. This may possibly be the track called "Rocks", recorded on 12 June, 1948, with piano and second guitar, which surfaced for the first time just a couple of months ago on the Krazy Kat Records double album *Boogie Awhile*. Anyway, the story goes that in November Hooker took this acetate to Bernie Besman, owner of a small label called Sensation Records, who immediately booked Hooker into United Sound studios.

The very first session produced "Boogie Chilien" and, in Hooker's words, "It took the country by storm!"

Over the next five years, the music poured out of John Lee Hooker. He was contracted to Modern Records of Los Angeles through his deal with Besman, but he also recorded for Detroit indies JVB, Danceland, Staff, Prize, King, Gone, Gotham, Rockin', Chance, Regent, Acorn, Deluxe, Savoy and Fortune, using a variety of pseudonyms such as Texas Slim, Johnny Williams, John Lee, Johnny Lee, Johnny Lee Hooker, John L. Hooker, John Lee Booker (!), John Lee Cooker (!!), John L'Hooker (!!!), Little Pork Chop and The Boogie Man.

Most of these releases were 78 rpm singles – and they were nearly all totally brilliant. Apart from one session of four songs in 1948, Hooker always played electric guitar: "It was a Les Paul and that's about it," he recalls. "And a Gibson [semi-acoustic]."

Most of these sessions took place in tiny studios – some of the best were in a back room at Joe Von Bartle's record store on Hastings Street – with Hooker's amp turned up to distortion level, a microphone on the board under his foot, and his voice treated to give it extra presence. Often he'd play with his group, The Boogie Ramblers, which included drums, piano and tenor sax, or with fellow boogie guitarist Eddie Kirkland, whose name appears in Hooker's discography more often than any other.

But essentially Hooker was a solo artist who used an electric guitar simply to boost the volume. He had no respect for chord sequences: his idea of a 12-bar blues was usually around the 14-bar mark, and quite often he wouldn't bother changing chord at all. The confusion Hooker could wreak with an unfamiliar rhythm section is legendary. But it should be pointed out that Hooker's recorded repertoire as a whole stands up better than any other blues 'great', because although he played with a greater variety of other musicians than any other blues singer, he never changed his style for any of them. Old John Lee just went on his own sublimely individual way – which means there are no embarrassing attempts to squeeze him into a soul or rock mode of the kind which litter the BB King, Wolf and Waters CVs. (The only possible exception was his approach to folk blues, see below.)

Sometimes when Hooker played with other musicians, they would try to force him to move through the sub-dominant and dominant chords; sometimes he'd play ball, sometimes he either wouldn't or couldn't and the results could sound chaotic. This never happened with Eddie Kirkland. He and Hooker seemed to have a telepathic understanding, and they developed a range of two-note 'chords' which could imply the changes without actually playing through them, leaving Hooker free to sing each line how he wanted.

And how Hooker sang had to be heard to be believed. The guy's voice was an absolute monster, with a weird kind of crack in it that made it sound permanently double-tracked (as it quite often was, which consequently came out sounding like four Hookers at once). Hooker had a malevolent, brooding aura which made it sound like he was literally chewing over his words: they would fade menacingly into a Don Corleone-style "mmmm" at the end of lines – which was often the closest

Hooker's songs got to a rhyme.

In the same way that he completely rejected chord sequences, he just chucked out the rule book on rhymes too – but as Dave Sax points out in his superb sleeve-note to *Boogie Awful*, although most of his songs didn't rhyme, it *seemed* like they did. This is an amazing trick to pull off. Van Morrison tries it when he joins Hooker on "Never Get Out Of These Blues Alive", and it sounds terrible. But with Hooker you never noticed.

Frequently Hooker appeared to be making a song up as he went along. A good example would be "House Rent Boogie", a very funny rap about his landlady chucking him out which sounds completely improvised – yet he recorded it at least four times between 1950 and 1970. It wasn't the same each time – Hooker has literally never played a song the same way twice, even when doing retakes – but it was undoubtedly the same song.

Even more unmistakably, it was John Lee Hooker: a rolling musical essence composed of a hundred indelible elements of Hooker – hammered guitar discords like raw nerve endings, those death-defying pauses between notes which always defeat the patience of his would-be imitators – little things that always added up to a far greater whole.

THAT INTOXICATING refined essence of Hooker finds its purest expression in his early work. There are a number of very good compilations of those years, and it doesn't matter much which you choose: the one thing to remember is play it loud, because that's how it was made.

In 1955 Hooker signed to the newly launched Vee Jay label, whose foremost artist was Jimmy Reed. Reed's band, the epitome of 'downhome', brought out the warm side in Hooker, and he cut a stream of magic records – a few with Reed himself on harmonica (if only there'd been more!), and all supported by Eddie Taylor or Lefty Bates on rhythm guitar.

It was at Vee Jay that Hooker cut his great rhythmic 'n' blues classics: "Dimples" in '56, "I Love You Honey" in '58, and "Boom Boom" in '61. The Vee Jay stuff again has been compiled over and over, but if you can lay hands on DJM's 1977 double LP, *Dimples*, you've got the definitive item.

By 1960 Hooker was starting to attract a white folk audience, and he entered a bizarre phase where he was catering to two completely opposed markets: loud, rockin' R&B for the black audience, and folk blues for the whites.

Unfortunately, rightly or wrongly, his approach to this lucrative new folk blues angle was somewhat sanitised, and you have the spectacle of Hooker, the R&B anarchist, making polite, insipid music with polite, insipid musicians (bear in mind that Dylan wasn't even recording at this time, let alone getting boozed off at the Albert Hall) for what sound like polite, insipid audiences. In 1959 Hooker had picked up an acoustic guitar for the first time in ten years to make his first album, *The Folk Blues Of John Lee Hooker*, then linked up with a chunky jazz rhythm section for *That's My Story* (the two LPs are now on one Ace CD).

By the mid-60s Hooker was a fixture in the known blues firmament. He toured Europe with the 1962, 1965 and 1969 Folk Blues Festivals, recording in Hamburg with T-Bone Walker and Buddy Guy; appeared at the '63 Newport Folk Festival; cut some Vee Jay R&B backed by Martha And The Vandellas; recorded in London with Tony McPhee's Groundhogs; and, on a momentous night in 1966, went head to head with the Muddy Waters Band in New York City to create a frighteningly mean, moody and magnificent LP, *Live At Café Au Go-Go*.

The irony was that he was recording less and less with the rough and ready rhythm sections that were his natural milieu. His last session with Eddie Burns on lead guitar was the 1966 Chess *Real Folk Blues* LP. His last with Eddie Kirkland and Eddie Taylor was in 1967 – bits of it crop up on *16 Greatest Hits* and *Tantalizing With The Blues*, sounding just as brilliant as anything from the previous 18 years.

Hooker continued to make good records, but it was as if he'd left home – and he still regrets it to this day. Ask him who he most enjoyed playing with in his career, and he'll pause for thought and then say: "Eddie Kirkland. Yeah. And Eddie Burns."

One curious fact about Hooker is that, because his songs were quasi-improvised, very few of them were covered by the British R&B groups who fed so greedily on Willie Dixon, Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley. So Hooker struggled to find a niche among the white rockers – until Canned Heat took Hooker's boogie blueprint to its ultimate, absurd extreme with 1968's *Boogie With Canned Heat*. Having sat themselves on the 40-minute "Reftied Hockey Boogie" jam, they then ushered Hooker himself into the 70s with *Hooker 'n' Heat*, a double album of boogie which brought Hooker a new rock audience.

Taking the hint, Hooker immediately followed it up with *Endless Boogie*, another double on which he worked out with such stars of the San Francisco psychedelic scene as Steve Miller and Mark Naftalin. For purist blues fans this rocky stuff was sacrilege, but Hooker begs to differ. "Endless Boogie was one of my favourite albums," he mutters. "I can't explain why. I just like it y'know."

Which of his albums would he put on right now?

"Oh, I put a lot of 'em on," he shrugs. "I got so many I could put on. I made so many good ones y'know!"

OVER THE next few years, Hooker recorded with some odd line-ups, notably the violins of Don 'Sugarcane' Harris (of The Mothers Of Invention) and Michael White. Late in the 70s, settled in the San Francisco Bay area, he'd appear at local joints like the Keystone in Palo Alto with the Coast To Coast Blues Band – who he's bringing with him to the London Blues Festival at Crystal Palace on 6 July. Live albums would emerge on indies such as Tomato and Lunar. In 1980 he also recorded live again with Canned Heat.

In the 80s Hooker drifted into venerable celeb mode,

continues on page 72

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In this month's issue, *magazine* Soundcheck

■ **Wire Winners**

Wire critics make their choice of the best new releases. This month – Tim Bown, Kraftwerk, Mozart, Basia Smith and more

■ **Soundcheck**

Our regular A-Z review section.

■ **Fast Licks**

A quickfire checklist of more new releases.

■ **Outlines**

Round-ups, record surveys, extended reviews. This month – Vivaldi and Telemann plus live blues.

String fever! Nina Simone in the 60s.

Photo by David Redfern

wire winner: ammmusic



AMM

*
The Nameless Untamed Block

Machness MR 20 CD

WITH TRACK titles "Sedimentary", "Igneous", and "Metamorphic", this one begs to be called AMM's rock album, but is of course nothing of the sort. As ever, the group mines its own tradition. There are sequences on *The Nameless Untamed Block*, a concert recording from 1990, which could have been taped the day before the 1966 classic *AMMatic*. Or, for that matter, tomorrow.

AMM seems to have lost little of its wide-eyed sense of wonder at the sounds it uncovers, never wearying of the fluctuating noise drones like traffic on the freeway or night shift on the conveyor belt, which frequently, and especially on "Sedimentary", underpins the activity; this is the indigenous music of our society, purposeful as the hum of worker bees. Now back on the team, Lou Gare gets to play more saxophone than he used to and his is the most "human" sound in evidence. Incredibly self-effacing, voice rarely raised above a murmur, he seems to be talking to himself much of the time, but does get the last cautious word in on "Metamorphic".

What else has changed in 25 years? The group's understanding of dynamics has become more refined. No other "free" group uses space as persuasively: true way back when, it's true now. AMM is in no hurry to reach climaxes in the music, but drummer Eddie Prevost's sense for when to apply the pressure is unerring: refer to the 30th minute of "Igneous". He also understands the power inherent in a single booming drumbeat.

Pianist John Tilbury's been a great and unacknowledged improviser for decades, breathing life into the graphic (and sometimes and) scores of contemporary composition, and he brings good structural ideas to AMM — for example the graceful "ballad" episode at the end of "Igneous" — respectful of the music's needs, never flaunting his virtuosity. And while I can always use more of Keith Rowe's scalding guitar there are other places to get that heat (his solo album last year, and the reissued *AMM III* CD); inside this AMM he too is totally committed to the ideal of group music. There's really nothing else around to which *The Nameless Untamed Block* can usefully be compared. It's another great AMM record, that's all, and that's enough.

STEVE LAKE

wire winner: jazz music today

TIM BERNE'S CAOS
TOTALE

*

Pace Yourself

JMT 834 442-2 CD

DESPITE THE NAME, Caos Totale is the least frenetically intense outfit I have heard Berne lead, and is none the worse for it. In fact, *Pace Yourself* is a more apt pointer to a set which is more restrained and less densely compacted than the likes of *Fatal Street Maul*, *Sacrificed Dreams*, or *Minature*. A large part of the greater spaciousness is down to drummer Bobby Previte, a far less busy player than Joey Baron, and one who is increasingly emerging as a real musician of note on the world jazz scene.

His work here is masterly throughout, and sets a high standard which the well-balanced

sexet happily meets. The textural variety supplied by the combination of Berne's caustic alto, Steve Swell's romping trombone, the nervous, stabbing guitar licks of Marc Dresser, and Herb Robertson's fiercely assertive trumpet, never settles into the predictable. There is little trace, either, of the eclecticism-run-riot which haunts the Downtown East Village scene; this is solidly inventive, deliciously irreverent contemporary improvisation, but with its roots firmly planted in jazz.

The six compositions are all by Berne; one, "Luna", is a solo saxophone piece, but the rest provide frameworks for impressive ensemble workouts. "Sam's Dilemma", for example, deftly achieves a mood switch from the knuckle-biting indecision of the opening to a cool, jaunty resolution, riding on Marc Dresser's snaking bass line.

The set flirts with serious weirdness in the rather more unconventional early sonorists of the lengthy "The Legend of P-1", with Herb Robertson scrapping some very odd noises from a balloon over Previte's asymmetric percussion, but it, too, exists — via a highly circuitous route — into another exhilaratingly funky ensemble polyphony. Pacing themselves they may be, but there are no slouches in this band.

KENNY MATHIESON

wire winner: blues guitar



BUDDY GUY

*

Damn Right, I've Got The Blues

Silverline One CD 516 CD/MC/LP

BUDDY GUY has been recognised as one of the best — if not the best — of all blues

guitarists ever since he made his mark in 1960 with "First Time I Met The Blues". Over 30 years on, that remains by far his greatest moment in his own right, and at 54 his fingers may soon begin to lose the flashing speed that has always been his trademark. So all credit to Silverstone Records for inviting Guy to London while still at the peak of his powers to cut his first studio LP for ten years.

Their faith has been fully vindicated. Guy's virtuoso guitar work on this album cuts just about every other blues guitar record to shreds. He is the absolute master, and we can only regret the way he has allowed his talents to go to waste since his mid-60s masterpieces with Junior Wells.

Guy teamed up with Wells partly because Junior was a much better singer, and there are times when his wayward presence might have improved this album. "Five Long Years", in particular, puts too much emphasis on Guy's voice, and he sounds awfully ill at ease. By contrast, "Remembizin' Steve" (Ray Vaughan) must surely be the best blues guitar instrumental ever: seven minutes of quite astonishing artistry. (The single of the title track also gives you a bonus B-side instrumental, aptly titled "Don't What I Like Best" — another brilliant slice of guitar exhibitionism.)

Down Right, produced by one-time Roxy Music member John Portier, teams Guy with a small band (Pete Wingfield on piano, Little Fear's Richie Hayward on drums) augmented on occasions by the Memphis Horns and uncredited female chorus. Mark Knopfler makes a mysteriously insatiable appearance on one cut, while Jeff Beck descends spectacularly, rather like a Martin, into a solid version of "Mustang Sally". Beck and Eric Clapton are also fighting in the frantic mix of a supercharged "Early In The Morning" — you won't hear a more unlikely waltz time this year.

Buddy's at his best when it's just him and his guitar — his solos on "Too Broke To Spend The Night", Willie Dixon's "Let Me Love You Baby" and the title track all combine searing attack with awesome technique, while his delicate musings in "Black Night" have a subtlety way beyond any other blues player.

Buddy Guy will never excite "First Time I Met The Blues", but he has equalled it at

last. Now let's have another one.

PHIL MCNEILL

wire winner: pop art



THE JAM

*

Greatest Hits

Polydor 809554/1 CD/MC/LP

HERE THEY come again, the sound and the fury and the familiar crashing chords. Most of these tracks have been released four or five times before. They've all visited the singles chart at least twice, most have appeared on individual albums, and all but one were on the 1983 *Snappy* compilation . . . and yet they still send the adrenalin rushing from the very first note.

In an incandescent six-year career, The Jam captured a raw English essence that no other group has tapped so completely. Paul Weller was the ultimate pop magpie, but he fused his influences into something uniquely potent. Musically The Jam seized upon the 60s pop art sounds of The Who and Small Faces, the upright 70s R&B attack of Dr Feelgood, and the live abandon of their contemporaries The Sex Pistols; visually they adopted the Feelgoods' suits, The Small Faces' haircuts, The Who's op art T-shirts . . . not forgetting the essential Mod accessories of red Rickenbacker guitars and Union Jacks.

As time went on, Weller added to his armoury, drawing on Ray Davies to inspire the 'story' songs such as "The Eton Rifles", or The Beatles' "Taxman" for "Scarf", and Curtis Mayfield for the brass injections of "Town Called Malice" that would eventually lead to The Style Council. But as is often the

case, each advance diluted the energy that was The Jam's greatest initial asset. Weller's restlessness was his own undoing: like a man who keeps getting promoted until he finally sticks in the one job he's no good at, Weller conquered each new style until he arrived at funk, which he was always going to be rather hopeless at, and there he has stuck ever since.

This chronological set clearly shows Weller's progress. The early songs are shot through with a furious energy. Guitarist Weller, bassist Bruce Foxton and drummer Rick Buckler launch into "In The City" like the SAS, but it was "All Around The World" that best encapsulated their 1977 slogan of 'Direction, Reaction, Creation', while "News Of The World" remains Weller's most abrasive recorded guitar part.

"David Watts" (1978) was a turning point, as Weller fell back on a mediocre Kinks song while casting round for a new direction. He eventually found it in "Down In The Tube Station At Midnight", which launched his most successful phase as a songwriter — bittersweet social commentaries like "Strange Town" and "When You're Young" wrapped up in complex structures packed with melody and power.

Weller could have channeled them our forever, but he soon found it too easy and his heart wasn't in it. "Funeral Pyre" (1981) was the final dismembering of the three-piece style, taking the apocalyptic feedback-splattered intro of "The Eton Rifles" and turning it into a whole song.

Firmly established as Britain's top group, The Jam promptly entered their most moribund period, as Weller rejected the hard pop at which he excelled to turn The Jam into a second-rate soul band. The best moments of "Absolute Beginners" and "Town Called Malice" came when he broke the Motown mould to inject his own melodic sensibility, but the innate power of the trio was lost.

By sticking strictly to the singles, this 19-track compilation makes only one serious omission: the sublime Who parodic "Away From The Numbers". But the 29-track *Snappy* set visits dodgy areas such as "Billy Hun" and "A Bomb In Wardour Street", and so gives a clearer picture of The Jam's entire career — to adapt their own formula: explosion, confusion, disintegration.

PHIL MCNEILL



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wire winner: robopop



KRAFTWERK

★

The Mix

EMI 1990 CD/MCPLP

"REAL MUSIC" diehards and rock 'n' roll humanists still regard them as "sterile", but the truth is that Kraftwerk are one of the most seminal bands ever. They've sired whole genres such as electro, acid house, Techno and synthi-pop, and influenced everyone from Bowie to 80s trance-rockers Spacemen 3. But even after a decade in which their ideas have been dispersed to the point of ubiquity, sometimes expanded upon but mostly diluted and degraded, Kraftwerk still sound remarkably fresh.

The Mix is a selection of Kraftwerk classics drastically reconstructed for the 90s dancefloor. It's well-named to connect with the current fascination with bygone notions of the futuristic, such as the Moog-based, 'kitchen-sink' of *World Of Twist* and *Instastella*. These days, Kraftwerk's vision of the future – a technocratic paradise of pristine efficiency – seems charmingly quaint and distinctly poignant, now that we know the 21st Century city is going to be more like Bombay than Milton Keynes.

Kraftwerk's music offers the beauty of a world without error, unsullied by the grubby fingerprints of humans. It's probably the least improvisational, un-jazziest music ever. But Kraftwerk "rock", in so far as they're a distillation of that rock 'n' roll lineage that aspires to the machine's state of grace. Kraftwerk dug The Stooges, The Velvet Underground, Suicide; the aesthetic affinity between "Man Machine" and James Brown's "Sex Machine" was obvious, even before

Afrika Bambaataa got JB to sing on the electro anthem "Unity". And there's no way that Kraftwerk are "soul-less" or unemotional (the commonest criticism), the exquisite arrangements (influenced by Brian Wilson) and near-hymnal melodies are sometimes heartbreakingly poignant.

Highlights? "Radioactivity", for the bit that sounds like an android speaking in rongues and the deadpan ecological war of the line "it's in the air / for you and me". "Homecomputer", for its apprehensive bass-line and a synth-effect that brings to mind eye the whirling data constellations of virtual reality. "Music Non Stop", which develops rap's human beatbox idea, its grid of beats built from sampled onomatopoeia ("boing", "boom", "chakk"). The *tour de force* is "Trans Europe Express", with its indefatigable beat and arching, monumental synths. "Teus" mutates into "Abzug", a symphony based around the Doppler Shift, which in turn becomes "Metal On Metal", a truly psychedelic, pre-Einsturzende exercise in metal-bashing.

SIMON REYNOLDS

wire winner: opera



WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

★

Idomeneo

Archiv 41 674-2 CD

OFFICIALLY, IT'S an *opéra seria* but "serious" hardly seems an adequate word to describe *Idomeneo*, the action-packed extravaganza into which Mozart crammed love, hate, jealousy, guilt, anguish, a shipwreck, a sea monster, an angry mob, human sacrifice, a minor earthquake and – in true *Twin Peaks* myster-

ious fashion – a supernatural Voice which suddenly proclaims a message from heaven. All this, and a happy ending too!

After 100 years in oblivion, *Idomeneo* currently enjoys a reputation as Mozart's most unfairly neglected masterpiece, a revision of status which the composer would have endorsed as it was one of his personal favourites. In fact, his wife Constanze later reported that the happiest period of Mozart's life was the winter he spent in Munich working on *Idomeneo*. Listening to the music you can almost hear the pleasure and satisfaction he must have felt in his work: this would be the first of his seven great operas and he surely realised its potential greatness even as he struggled to get it down on paper, revising and editing right up to – and after – the first performance.

Part of the opera's success derives from its combination of youthful zest and confident mastery: Mozart was still only 25 when he wrote *Idomeneo*, yet it was the tenth opera he had composed and he knew by this time exactly what he wanted from a libretto. He had also learned to appreciate the dramatic qualities of opera; here he uses the music both to move the action along, blending recitative and aria to an unprecedented degree, and to illuminate character, linking the outer storms of the plot (set on the isle of Crete) with the inner turmoil of the protagonists. Mozart's music echoes the state of the surrounding sea throughout – brilliantly so in the farewell and storm scenes that close Act Two and appropriately so overall as Neptune is the opera's presiding deity.

This new three-CD recording, by John Eliot Gardiner, The Monteverdi Choir and The English Baroque Soloists, is taken from live concerts at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall in June 1990. It is, in every way, a superlative release. The singing is consistently strong, with Anthony Rolfe Johnson (*Idomeneo*) and Anne Sofie Von Otter (*Idamante*) outstanding. Gardiner and his musicians are no less impressive; their experience in 18th Century opera, in Mozart's instrumental music and in authentic performance all used to telling effect. This attentive to authenticity is, I think, the crucial factor: timbral colours have a fresh, raw-edged power, textures are light, rhythms nimble and spring-heeled, and the delicate touches are played with a stringent deftness.

that precludes any hint of Romantic indulgence. Gardner's choices of tempo and dynamic are astute too, helping the action to flow and the drama to stay taut.

Choice of material is based on the 1781 Munich production, though with a few cuts restored and some alternative scenes (which Mozart wrote at the time) included at the end of the relevant disc, so listeners can programme in or out whichever cuts and alternative versions they choose. Such thoroughness is indicative of the care, respect and love for the music which has gone into this recording. The reward is an *Idomeneo* which is certain to stand as the definitive version for a long time to come.

GRAHAM LOCK

wire winner: andy pandy jazz

COURTNEY PINE

★

Wither The Readers Of Our Dreams

Amis A&M CD 8716 £10.99/£P

YOU KNOW the history: fastest, smartest, youngest sax dude in the West makes a killing on the jazz revival boom market. At least, somebody did: I don't know how much money Courtney saw. Like with all those guys who were acclaimed as the New Bird in the freedom-haunted '60s, we loaded over-heavy, irrelevant responsibilities onto young shoulders then bemoaned thwarted expectations whilst thoughtlessly applauding the hoop-jumping. Was it not our own RD Cook who pleaded rightly and sagaciously for time for Pine to grow and mature? (How's that for bowing and scraping, Ed?) The first, brightest, scorchingest glare of the lights has mellowed apace and maybe we can begin to see the real artist rather than the thrown, distorted shadow.

Pine's debut, smash-seller *Journey To The Urge Within*, is on its way to a gold disc, but its glister doesn't outshine the altogether more substantial achievements of this new album. If I say that *Reader* is massively, genuinely derivative it may sound like an adverse criticism, but this time it's not. If Courtney has laboured in the shadow of his own premature legend he has also sheltered within the shadow of Coltrane. Now, to an extent neither he nor anyone else of his

tender vintage has been able (or could be expected) to, he has captured the *spirit* of Trane's inspiration, not just the techniques. This is playing of an emotional depth which I have not heard him produce since before the hype started to swamp the serious, dedicated, dignified young artist at the centre.

Like I said, Trane's aegis still shadows and sheltered him. The influence is there in the title, in the sound and structures, in the storming soprano and tenor playing, in the writing. There is even, in "Time To Go Home", a memory of Trane's transformations of Disney-licks like the Shemans' "Chim Chim Cheree". A jazz version of the *Andy Pandy* song? Now, that's hip!

Knowing what Courtney is capable of I've been sorry that I was usually unable to share the general enthusiasm for what he actually produced on record. No reservations this time. Not about the composing, nor about the improvising. Digging in with wit and utter conviction, Courtney convinces utterly. He's in excellent form – with more than a word or two of commendation for Kenny Kirkland, Charnett Moffett and Jeff Waters who give all the support he could wish – and those dreams may yet be realised.

BARRY WITHERDEN

wire winner: new pop



SAM PHILLIPS

★

Cruel Intentions

Virgin America CDVUS 12 £10.99/£P

THE CLOSER you get to this album, the better it gets. At first glance Sam Phillips is a deft exponent of the traditional pop song with one of those pleasantly acidic country-tinged

voices that says she has to come from Texas.

Then things slip a little out of joint. The arrangements become more peculiar with each hearing – here's a song introduced by a swirl of distorted garage guitar that inexplicably fades into mantra-like percussion and a churchy organ, until suddenly a massive bass drum drops in like the floor's given way, and then as the song cuts over to the bridge it finds it's been waylaid by a string quartet on the loose from *Sgt Pepper*, which in turn gets kicked aside by a brash R&B guitar.

Sam Phillips is an American lady with two things in common with the early Kate Bush: a lot of talent and even better connections. The devilishly clever production of *Cruel Intentions* is by T-Bone Burnett, man of the moment: the only production job I've heard this year that comes anywhere near it, in a radically different vein, was his own Willie Dixon effort. Burnett is also the principal of four guitarists (along with Marc Ribot, Elvis Costello and Phillips herself) who contribute as much as anyone to an album of unusually inventive playing all round.

Phillips's other main collaborator is Van Dyke Parks – a legend since the '60s, when he co-wrote 'Heroes And Villains' with Brian Wilson. He creates some marvellous string quartet arrangements for Phillips, and is one of the three players (along with Phillips and Burnett) of an arcane analog synthesizer called a Chamberlain, which produces strange, whooshing carnaval noises. Phillips herself describes the Chamberlain as "real sounds on tape loops . . . a wonderful, whirling invention", which pretty much sums up the LP.

Some of the arrangements are so ravishingly kaleidoscopic, they could easily overwhelm weaker songs than the ten here, but Phillips is a supremely confident songwriter. Her melodies cut an unerring path through music which ranges from the spare and subtle to the ornate and occasionally over-arranged – while her words, when you finally get round to them, are mysterious and cliché-free. Her range is ideally shown by "Lying", the forceful opener described above, and "Tripping Over Gravity", which has the translucent quality of Michael Jackson's "Human Nature", with a chiming melody that is so beguiling, Phillips herself gets hooked on it, repeating it endlessly until it dissolves into a distant tinkle of church bells.

and violins.

Sam Phillips is touring Britain this month with Consello. If, like me, you missed 1988's *The Incredible Wow* album, do yourself a favour: don't miss out a second time. With *Great Inventors* and a new Crowded House LP, classic pop is staging a surprise comeback this summer.

PHIL MCNEILL

wire winner: reissue



BEBBIE SMITH

*

The Complete Recordings Vol 1
Columbia 467895 CD

WHEN Bebbie tried out for recording, they thought she was going to be "too rough". Her first test side, for OKeh, was interrupted when she broke off in the middle of the song and said "Hold it, I gotta spit!" Bad luck for OKeh that they came to the wrong decision, all of her recordings were made for Columbia, and now they're all emerging as a comprehensive CD edition.

The Empress Of The Blues was already an uncompromising performer, even in 1923: her very first side, "Down Hearted Blues", sounds as authoritative as any of her later records, and only a certain stiffness in some of her phrasing betrays that this was a tyro in the studios. The voice would assume its fullest majesty later, and Columbia was still tied to acoustic recording, but the power of Smith's singing is astounding. Compared with such immediate contemporaries as Mamie Smith or Edith Wilson, whose voices were lighter and prettier, Bebbie was stentorian.

You can tell how self-willed Smith was by the tempos here. It's hard to think of another

vocalist who sang at such a consistently slow pace, which is why so many of these sides run well over three minutes, unusual for the time. Many of the piano introductions start at what seem like impossibly ponderous tempos, only for Smith's massive voice to make them sound right. Most of the accompaniments are piano only, by the likes of Clarence Williams and Fletcher Henderson: clarinet by Ernest Elliot (awful) and Don Redman (not much better) or violin by Robert Robbins (scratchy) offer slight variation.

This double-CD set offers her first 38 titles: hard on the ears, since these are all-acoustic performances, and the latest round of remastering has added nothing to the sound of the LP reissues of the 70s except the merest *sugars* of extra reverb. The great accompaniments by Louis Armstrong and Joe Smith are yet to come. Hem, though, are "Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do", "Bleeding Hearted Blues", "Any Woman's Blues" and one of my favourites, "Ticket Agent Ease Your Window Down". Plus two of her duets with Clara Smith: again, they recorded better ones later, but it was a remarkable partnership. Alas, they had a fist fight in 1925 and never spoke to one another again.

RICHARD COOK

wire winner: circus jazz



**HENRY THREADGILL'S
VERY VERY CIRCUS**

*

Spirit Of Nuff...Nuff
Black Sun 120 134 CDLP

VERY VERY Prime Time, spirit of Decoding Society you could say, too, judging by the

first track . . . But although that would offer some basic references, the frequently frantic attack and cluttered textures of those bands are here transformed: slowed down, thinned out and analysed before being reassembled into a still rich but more consciously-organised manner. So it all sounds more composed – in both senses of the word.

At times, as on the slow "Unrealistic Love", which builds slowly to a central guitar passage before Threadgill's alto enters, the seemingly casual way in which various elements are put together to produce a result which reveals its logic retrospectively shows an affinity with some of John Carter's work. Again, in the rich trombone, tuba and percussion passage which opens "Driving You Slow And Crazy" there's also the feel of some of the textural values of the Jazz Composers' Orchestra of the late 1960s and early 1970s, adapted to this very much smaller ensemble. The subordination throughout of brass for string (acoustic or electric) basses has much to do with this.

This sense of organisation, of a compositional feel, can at times take the ear away from what are actually impressive individual instrumental contributions. The two guitarists, Brandon Ross and Masujiro, work together in a collective post-modern manner (hear them scuttling around the brooding "Bee Dee Aff"). Threadgill's alto is consistently fluent and melodically inventive, though he's used himself quite sparingly. His flute-playing is unveiled only on "First Church Of This" but leads throughout. There's a hint of the sound and style of Eric Dolphy, and it's none the worse for that. Trombonist Curtis Fowlkes has a fashionably abrupt manner (fascinating how the smooth-flowing, multi-noted hegemony established by JJ Johnson was shattered by Roswell Rudd's opening notes with the New York Art Quartet and has now disappeared without a trace . . .) with a deliberate hint of rust in the tone. Drummer Gene Lake gets a workout at the start of "In The Ring" – elsewhere he fits well into an ensemble where the traditional rhythm-section concept has almost entirely disappeared.

It would be interesting now to see what Threadgill could do with a really large-scale commission, but for the moment this set is both welcome and entirely satisfying. Got to be a winner.

JACK COOKE

ARDITTI STRING

QUARTET

Arditti Two

Gramophone GV 79 439 CD

THERE is a hardness and purity about the string quartet that saved it from the worst excesses of Romanticism, thus avoiding the need for the pyrrhic purgatives of the doctors from Vienna.

Bartók saw that there were ways forward other than serialism or neo-classicism, without opting for any easy routes. His quartets remain forbidding and still stand as the yardsticks for all attempts at the genre. Here the Arditti plays his 4th, dating from 1928 and constructed in arch form: even the central movement, some of Bartók's night music, is a triptych echoing the overall symmetry. The five movements are built on the sparser of melodic material developed – the term seems almost too casual to describe the process. Bartók uses – with the greatest rigour and invention.

Bartók's fourth movement introduces a wide range of innovative pizzicato techniques. Sofia Gubaidulina's Quartet No 3 (1987) begins pizzicato, the techniques now absorbed into the grammar. The quartet's single movement unfolds, growing like some crystalline structure: appropriately enough Gubaidulina refers to "cultivation" rather than composition. She uses a variety of timbres but the overall effect is spare and skeletal, and the quartet is almost halfway through its 19 minutes before any bowed sounds are heard. At first even these are harsh and shrieking. The rest of the piece is full of sighing, sobbing, moaning phrases as it refines itself into silence.

Alfred Schnittke's Quartet No 2 (1980) seems to pick up from where Gubaidulina leaves off, spiralling slowly down into the field of view before setting off on four movements of harshly urgent exploration. As recently as five years ago Schnittke apparently did not rate a mention in most reference books. He is now rated as one of the most important and original of contemporary composers, even getting his own season of concerts in London. He and Gubaidulina shape up well in Bartók's company and the Arditti, unsurprisingly, does full justice to all three composers.

BARRY WITHERIDEN

BELA BARTÓK

Concerto For Orchestra: Music For Strings, Percussion And Celesta

DG 429 747 CD

The Wooden Prince: Hungarian Pictures

Chandos CHAN 8895 CD/MC

BARTÓK AND KODÁLY

Hungarian Folk Dances, Etc

Album TROY046 CD

TOUGH as Bartók's musical arguments may be, they are frequently dressed in sumptuous textures, and these are fully realised by the Philharmonia/Jarvi (Chandos) and the Chicago SO/Levine (DG). The Chicago album on DG presents Bartók's greatest hits, which (perhaps surprisingly) are not his most ac-



cessible works. They both date from the last years of his life, when he was well-regarded and in full command of his artistic forces. In the six years that separate them Bartók had become a political refugee, suffered bereavement, and developed his final illness, yet the Concerto, the later of the two works, demonstrates no less vigour. James Levine, an accomplished interpreter of opera and late-Romantic symphonies, has no problems with the scenario (vaguely Mahlerian in its progress through what Bartók himself described as "the death-song of the third [movement] to the life-affirmation of the finale") and is equally convincing in the more severe *Music For Strings, Percussion And Celesta*, with its renowned, eerie Adagio. My only quibble is that his allegros, especially the final movement of the *Music For Strings*, sound rushed

rather than fast.

Of Bartók's three major theatrical works *The Wooden Prince* is now regarded as a lesser piece than *The Miraculous Mandarin* and *Bluebeard's Castle*, although it was a great success from the start. In 1931, some 14 years after its premiere, Bartók reworked it into the familiar Suite, performed far more often than the full ballet music. This recording is of a complete, though not necessarily definitive, score: there are at least two different versions extant, one with the Budapest State Opera and the other (used here) with Universal Edition. Neeme Järvi conducts the Philharmonia with conviction and aplomb.

The "Hungarian Pictures", which round out the Chandos disc, and the various items performed by the Crofton Consort on Albany are amongst the composer's most approachable pieces. The Consort uses "folk" instruments (banjos, guitars, mandolin, penny-whistle, recorder) to interpret songs, dances and practice pieces which Bartók and Kodály (who's represented here by just four short works) intended for young people. It is one of those ideas, full of enthusiastic logic (after all, guys, this stuff was inspired by genuine ethnic music, collected by Bartók himself) which so often come to grief in the execution. These performances work sufficiently well on their own terms, so that I never feel conscious of listening to mere novelty versions of Bartók.

BARRY WITHERIDEN

CAREY BELL,
BILLY BRANCH,
JAMES COTTON,
JUNIOR WELLS

Harp Attack

Alligator AL 4790 CD

FOUR YEARS ago Alligator records brought together three major blues guitarists, Albee Collins, Johnny Copeland and Robert Cray, for an album entitled *Shadowbox* which was an artistic and commercial success. Now they attempt a similar concept with four big-league Chicago blues harmonica men, three of whom have held down the hottest harp-man's job in the blues world – in the Muddy Waters band – and the fourth of whom, Billy Branch, is a mere scrapping at 37.

This is not an album packed with four-man harp battles: indeed, of the 11 tracks



only one, "Down Home Blues", gives blowing space to all the frontmen. But they work in various combinations in front of a tight and purposeful rhythm section, allowing each to show, and in some instances show off, his strengths: Corson, with his enormous, freight-train whistle tone, the most powerful, Wells, the cleanest and most rhythmic; Bell, the most dynamic and nakedly blue, Branch, the most flexible and innovative.

Despite the presence of the ubiquitous "Down Home Blues", the choice of material is refreshing, mixing half-a-dozen original songs with such seldom-heard blues oldies as Willie Love's "Little Cat Blues". Of the new songs, Branch's autobiographical "New Kid On The Block" is the strongest, overcoming a slightly clichéd central theme. He pays tribute to the harp players, such as Wells and Big Walter Horton, who coached him in his younger days, asserts that they did their job well, and proceeds to prove the point in a charging, distorted *tour de force* of a chorus. Wells's "Broke And Hungry" does nothing to dispel the rumour that Junior would like to be James Brown, but the funky backing is notable for the harps of Branch and Corson imitating a riffing saxophone section.

Professor Longhair once said that "Piano players hardly ever play together". It hardly never happens with harmonica men either, one lone some wailer being sufficient for most blues bands, and the fact that it happens here is the aspect which makes this disc stand out.

MIKE ATHERTON

ANOUAR BRAHEM

Batzakh

ECM 1432 CD/MCPLP

TYPICAL. We get Purgatory; they get Batzakh, a quiet, cool place where you rest your bones before moving on to some last reward. The music is a little like that, too: uncompromisingly improvisational, a meeting place for all cultures and times, but far from the purgatorial agonies of self-regard and of trying to make an apostolic tradition out of just 12 disagreeable tones.

Some of Brahem's themes are slightly cheesy, but the oud has sprouted a twig or two of jazz pedigree — Rabih Abou-Khalil is a master, and Ahmed Abdul-Malik rhythmmed one in a Coltrane band (as well as bass

with Coleman Hawkins) — which makes it easier to hear what he's about. Brahem draws on a huge Mediterranean tradition that draws on French gipsy music, Sicilian dance (not credited, but I'm convinced), Spanish folk tunes, Django, and ECM's very own piano man Keith Jarrett, whose modal journeys are said to have struck a big chord (if that isn't a mixed metaphor) with the young Tunisian.

On that front, it's understandable but not altogether seemly that the label should pur such emphasis on the fissiparous nature of much of their recent recordings. ECM is profoundly influential, and there is now a generation of listeners and players who grew up to that — never say "sound" singular — growing rosette of singular sounds. This music is older but also utterly contemporary



Stop and ask any passing anthropologist: parenthood is not the only degree of kinship.

BRIAN MORTON

CASSIBER

A Face We All Know

ReRLLCD CD

RIPPY, RAUGETTEY, tackety and riotous, Cassiber continue to fascinate me, although their espousal of rock as noise as art as rock has become diluted in the hands of so many other aspiring practitioners of the call-it-a-genre

Cassiber have an underground-ish history which predates the advent of the easy options in this area, and it shows. The studio-based experimentation which was held up as a virtue of much of the earlier examples of this

music (not least by the musicians themselves) has been subject to interpolation in recent years by the wonders of sampling and computer assistance. The musical component of *A Face We All Know* demonstrates this in abundance, but draws on the new technology mainly in order to misuse it. Thus, precariously anchored by Chris Cutler's hell-for-leather drumming, the instrumentation employed by his associates Christoph Anders and Alfred Hause veers between elegant, almost mannered melodic lines and complex volleys of screeches and roars, over which declamatory vocal passages are projected like one half of a conversation yelled across a moray.

This CD has a literary component as well, in the form of texts by Cutler and Thomas Pynchon. The resulting interaction of twisted semantics with equally twisted sound assemblages are evocative of a bitter paranoiac which seems disturbingly familiar and correct, and the fact that Cutler's educated, deadpan reading-voice sounds vaguely funny, like a law student on downers, serves to make this excellent piece of work even more unsettling.

TOM CORRIN

COLD SWEAT

4 Play

JMT 814 444 2 CD

COLD SWEAT's debut album was a tribute to the in-the-pocket, on-the-beat funk of The Hardest Working Man In Showbusiness, Mr Please, Please, Please himself, Jaassemimme Brown. *4 Play* is the logical follow up, being a collection of classic, mid-tempo soul ballads from the '70s and '80s (in black music terms such exquisitely tender songs as The Dramatics' "In The Rain" and DeBarge's "The Secret Garden", both covered here, represent the inverse approach to thrusting, four-on-the-floor, workouts like "Sex Machine" and "Hot Pants").

Despite the initiating presence of such avant-garde heavyweights as Craig Harris, Melvin Gibbs and George Adams, *4 Play* is to all intents and purposes a consummate mainstream soul album, combining polish and professionalism with songs that are a natural sequence of intros, verse and hooks. Fortunately it has more in common with all those Hush/Nick Martinelli productions

from the mid-80s than any recent GRP project. This means I like it a lot.

Most of the tracks are instrumental, dominated by spongy bass lines, distant middle-ground arrangements and deploying either trumpet or trombone as a lead instrument. There are relatively few solo features, although George Adams turns in an unexpectedly plangent performance on "The Secret Garden" and Craig Harris strolls sedately through a version of "La La Means I Love You".

Vocal contributions come from Fred Wells, in excellent, posturing soul man form on The Stylistics' "You Are Everything", and ex-60s supper club crooner Andy Bey. The latter's versions of "Round Midnight" and "Going Round In Circles" sound like things John Lucien might have recorded, perhaps on his recent and immaculate *Learn Love* album. That in itself should be recommendation enough for anyone. **TONY HERRINGTON**

STEVE COLEMAN AND FIVE ELEMENTS

Black Science

RCA Novus/PD 83119 CD/DMC

THIS MAY well be the most pleasing set that Coleman and the Elements have recorded. In concert the band has sounded good, and Coleman has played stunningly on other people's records, but albums by Five Elements have tended to have a scattergun feel, the music rebounding off several targets without doing any real damage (thank you Nigel K) to the extent that, with an album like *World Expansion*, it sounds intriguing at first play but ever after you are constantly sticking in your thumb without finding a plumb, just lots of gravy: quite tasty but little substance.

But before the metaphors get any more mixed I had better get back to the present recording. I'm not at all sure I accept the similarity to harmolodics which is touted from all sides, Steve Coleman included. I hear what they mean (that is, for example, group music, Coleman declining star-solo-with-rhythms-section status) but I'd say there are at least as many traces of classic James Brown — layers of tight, punchy rhythm collating into a pretty direct, well-cohering whole — as of the centrifugal peril of Prime

Time.

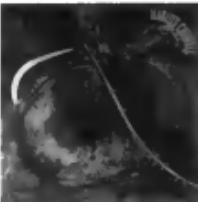
Group music or no, I would have welcomed more solo space from Coleman: despite his claim that his playing is the same in all contexts, his work on record with Dave Holland demonstrates melodic and developmental skills which are not exercised here. But I don't want to fall into the trap of reviewing the record for what it is not, when what it is so enjoyable. The band meshes smoothly, Cassandra Wilson and Holland again guest on some tracks, and generally it'll keep the customer happy.

BARRY WITHERDEN

MARILYN CRISPRESS

Circle

Victor CD012 CD



+

THE MUSIC of avalanche and waterspout wracked by expressive sobs, Crispell achieves a trenchancy here which is truly rare. While instrumental skill increases across the board, fusions and filigree become replacements for statement. Crispell moves in the opposite direction — towards a free jazz of monumental momentum.

Away from Anthony Braxton's angular chasm, Gerry Hemingway here emerges as a *drawmer*, Elvin-like rhuds and eruptive cymbals punishing the soloists into caustic extremes. There was always a blocky simplicity in Crispell's piano that made the Cecil Taylor comparisons superficial, and here the whole ensemble plays like that. The 23-minute opener "Ritual" is a devastating turmoil of parallel harmonic expansions.

Perer Buetner's tenor is both vivid and

apely turgid, Oliver Lake's alto stormingly original (though utterly devoted to Crispell's concept). Reggie Workman — the unit's historical link to the legacy of Coltrane — provides the big rocks beneath, his bowed showcase on "Chant" a delight.

Recorded live in Victoriaville in October 1990, this music leaves you exhausted and trembling, as if you had been crying. Crispell has tapped into the physical assault of late Trane. The fain-hearted need not apply.

BEN WATSON

THE CRUSADERS

Healing The Wounds

GRP 9638 CD/DMC

NOT AN album to be dismissed lightly. Outside fusion circles The Crusaders may enjoy little credibility, and they may have been eclipsed by the younger Kenny Generation over the last decade, but as some of the earliest progenitors of the form (if you can get your hands on 1973's *Using Hands* don't let it go) it's good to see them still blowing strong.

For one thing Wilton Felder, like David Sanborn and Grover Washington Jr, has an instantly recognisable tone and style. This may be because it has changed very little in 30 years, but his casual legato, characteristic swallows, slurs and slides, and a strong melodic sense, make him a compelling soloist. Felder simply fits this form, he really makes his solo work. The mature style of Joe Sample (the other survivor from the original Jazz Crusaders days) is also well measured; you may have to get used to solos so clipped that they rarely last longer than 45 seconds, but his underlying blues feel suits perfectly.

And with all Marcus Miller-produced projects, there is a crystalline brilliance to the sound of this album, something diamond-polished, a feel as tight as a drum machine. Miller's influence injects a range of new moods into The Crusaders' approach — from the rap backbeats of "Shake Dance", to the prog-rock reworking of Stevie Wonder's "Cause We've Ended As Lovers" and the album's highspot, "Little Things Mean A Lot", a soul shuffle with a sweet melody. Forget the crass cover and let *Healing The Wounds* soothe those jazz-funk scars.

PHILIP WATSON

DEFUNKT
Live At The Knitting Factory
 ENEMYCD122-2 CD

ON THIS showing the ragged agit-funk of this band's exhilarating early work seems to have run its course. This Christmas concert may have been great for the punters who showed up at the Knitting Factory but the motives for preserving it on plastic are probably dubious. The band's core style belongs emphatically to the era before hiphop tightened its grip, before the jazz overground was nattered by the breeze of Afro-centrism and before the dull outpourings of Living Colour set the benchmark for viable black rock experimentation.

Tense covers of "Come Together" and "Manic Depression" betray Defunkt's inability to adapt to these changed conditions. The harmonics have been filtered out, but the musical vehicle for Joe Bowie's pose-punk nihilism is intact in spite of some personnel changes. Kim Clark's bass is as lively as ever, Kenny Martin's snare drum marks the backbeat with a pleasing thwack and Bill Bickford is clearly a competent rock player squinting over his shoulder at Jimi's ghost. The joyful way they attack their instruments has a real, though limited, appeal in today's desert of digitised Rhythm and Blues but it isn't going to be enough to maintain a countercoffensive against the forces of fake funk.

Hit and miss horn arrangements and dogged indifference to vocal techniques sound nothing but downright careless. If you're a diehard Defunkt-areer you'll need this, otherwise you can pass.

PAUL GILROY

LEE DORSEY
Great Gonga Murga
 Cleopatra NEV 3 CD

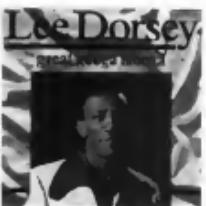
NOT ANOTHER 40-track double CD! Forty tracks of minor 60s soul man Lee Dorsey . . . "Ride Your Pony", "Working In The Coal Mine" and 38 fillers. Who needs it?

Well, I do for one. I thought I'd already got the best of Lee with the MFP *Greates Hits* and the 1970 album *Yes We Can*. How wrong can you be? Every single one of these 40 tracks is just great.

Dorsey was the best-known exponent of

New Orleans soul - a looser, warmer, more musically style than the Memphis and Detroit brands, based around the rolling R&B piano perfected by Dr John (who played on some of Dorsey's early 60s records) and Allen Toussaint.

Toussaint dominated N'Orleans soul in the 60s and 70s. In 1965 he revived Lee's career with "Ride Your Pony" (Lee had actually had his biggest US hit in '61, when he sold a million with "Ya Ya" - but then went back to being a car mechanic!) and they worked together until 1978, when Lee returned to the auto repair shop which he never completely gave up even at the height of his success. Their relationship was as close as a writer/singer/part gets. Toussaint's songs rarely extended beyond a goofy smile, and Lee barely raised himself out of his chair to



sing them.

It's surprising how many of these songs anyone knows, not just from Lee's originals - "Do-Re-Mi", "Can You Hear Me?", "Get Out Of My Life, Woman", "Confusion", "Holy Cow", "My Old Car", "Everything I Do Gonh Be Funky", "Pony", "Coal Mine" - but also from successful covers by other artists: "Ya Ya" (Peru Clark), "Yes We Can" (Pointer Sisters' breakthrough), "Sneakin' Sally Thru The Alley" (Robert Palmer's breakthrough) and "Freedom For The Sealion" (Hues Corporation).

Musically the set traces a leisurely path from laidback rock 'n' roll through lazy 60s soul to the 70s songs backed by The Meteors. (Note how they contradict the cliché that black pop is all about the beat, with Joseph Modeliste's restrained drumming leaving so

much space for the other instruments, particularly George Porter's catlike bass, which almost seems to duet with Dorsey.)

A definitive portrait of a charming man.

PHIL MCNEIL

ROBIN EUBANKS

Karma

JMT 834462 CD

MORE LEFT field eclecticism with an M-Base imprint. Trombonist Robin Eubanks's last JMT release, *Dedication*, was a relatively conventional affair. *Karma* picks up from where his debut album, *Different Perspectives*, left off, assuming a rather more diffuse, protean approach to the musical process.

A quick scan of the opening tracks reveals elements co-opted from rap, swing beat, street samba, acoustic jazz, MOR fusion and so on and so forth. But accusations of aesthetic dabbling are deflected by the depth of understanding Eubanks brings to these various musical strands and the tacit, integrated nature of the group performances.

The title track opens proceedings as a physical if somewhat hackneyed take on current trends in mainstream US R&B. "Mino", an extended bacata, multi-tracks percussive, Mino Cinelu to generate authenticity and momentum for Eubanks's cavalier trombone solo. "Maybe Next Time" and "Resolution Of Love" are limp, contemporary fusion ballads, the latter featuring a typically melismatic Cassandra Wilson vocal. "The Yearning" and "Remember When", a tribute to Art Blakey, provide familiar hard bop settings for solos by Branford Marsalis and Renee Rosnes whilst "Evidently" and "Penitance" develop into compelling trio performances, presenting Eubanks, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith in particularly empathetic mood. "Variety as the concept with the common thread of good music holding it together," says the trombonist in his sleeve note. That just about nails it.

TONY HERRINGTON

JOHNNY GRIFFIN

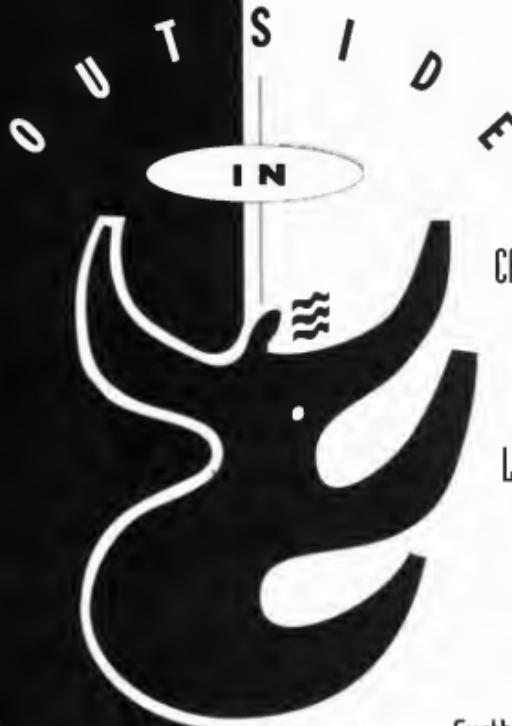
The Cat

Arville ANCD 8762 CD/MC

GRIFFIN'S REPUTATION as an exhilarating

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soloist in the hard-bop tradition has tended to typecast him as a powerful swinger prepared to take on all-comers. With a muscular sound and a fast and formidable execution honed in the heat of battle, repelling such notable boarders as Dexter Gordon and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Griffin's past achievements have projected a rather one-dimensional image of combatant rather than contemplative. But during the last decade he began demonstrating a more philosophical side to his playing with less emphasis on speed and more on expression.

The Cat, Griffin's debut on the Antilles label, shows he is still at ease with frantic tempos of hard-bop, as on "Hot Sake", but is more inclined to use slower tempos to explore the nooks and crannies of each passing chord change. "Waltz For Ma", a duet with bassist Dennis Irwin, shows him less swashbuckler, more recitalist.

Indeed, the album's first three cuts, "The Cat", "Wistful" and "What Do You Do" are all medium or slow groovers, with Griffin using portamento effects that have their origins in Johnny Hodges's jump style. Curtis Fuller and vibist Steve Nelson sustain the mood of dark brown tone-colours on their respective cuts, with Fuller's felt-murder trombone the very essence of stylistic discretion. Griffin, no longer burdened with the combative spirit of youth, succeeds here in proving good jazz can be cool and hot.

STUART NICHOLSON

HENRY KAISER
Hope You Like Our New Direction
BECKLESS BECK 21 CD/LP

KAISER KNOWS TOO MUCH AND TOO LITTLE about the many voices of the electric guitar. Too much about all the ways it's been made to sound down the years and round the world; too little about how it may be able to sound now, if you don't want anyone to forget all the other ways even when you're playing your way (he doesn't).

His respect loads down his music with a freight of concern, and he pursues his fun in ways that often translate as a muso academic's pathetic gymnastics: the rhard song on *Hope*, which comes between a "Mekong Delta Blues" medley and a Hawaiian gospel song, is a cruelly overworked "Rock On" (hit

for David Essex in 1973 – good words); later on, the Mamas And Papas' "California Dreamin'" (1966) is just slackly pissy. The set as a whole is fairly meaningless, except as yet another grab-bag of the oh-so-panglobally eclectic kinds of things he gets up to, sort of like Tom Verlaine with John Zorn's record collection (without the former's fish-eyed monomania or the latter's buzzed-out impatience). The best moment is actually Richard Thompson's: "Annihilation In Allah", traditional, Islamic, and – thanks to Thompson's doomed vocal – powerful.

Kaiser's own best proves he can cut loose inside his own all-mastered technique – the scrambled electric density of his solo "Distant Stars", for example – but it takes an embittered old fundamentalist/folkie divorcee to make losing yourself in a music seem

spontaneous group interaction is its spark. What is slightly more mysterious, however, is just how music exclusively designed, in Nusrat's own words, "to elevate the listener nearer to God", can have such a profound emotional impact on a card-carrying atheist like the present writer. Presumably, like other favourite pieces of music (*A Love Supreme*, *What's Going On*, *Karma*), the power and eloquence of the performers' commitment is such as to transcend the particular.

Be that as it may, *Shabbaz* is at least the equal both of the two excellent Paris concerts on Oncora and of the two-volume set on Womad. Highly recommended to anyone with an ear for irresistible rhythm, subtle extemporisations and passionate energy.

CHRIS PARKER

BAABA MAAL

Baays

Mango CIDM 1061 848 309-3 CD/MC/LP



possible in such a Smithsonian atmosphere

MARK SINKER

NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN
Shabbaz

Real World R.W.16 CD/MC/LP

BACK IN his accustomed setting after last year's pop-oriented excursion *Maut Maut*, the dozen of Sufi devotional music is represented at his formidable best here on four longish tracks.

Jazz listeners probably have a smaller distance to travel than many to appreciate the strengths of this apparently alien form; qawwali relies for much of its hypnotic excitement on ever more daring and passionate improvisations upon chosen themes, and

CRITICISING AFRICAN music for using state-of-the-art technology isn't just boring; it's also wrong, like saying the only good poetry is written with a stylus on a wax tablet. That said, Maal's music is more affecting and powerful than that of many of his West African colleagues who've embraced every gleaming new machine in the catalogue – I think more than anything because "spare" and "simple", if they happen to be the noise values you're after, can apparently be achieved more successfully when acoustic instruments and voice dominate (a more accurate assessment is probably that their "settings" aren't all marker-forced towards "Western" sound).

Baays is most often and most obviously about a drama of voice or voices – synthesiser colours silence almost imperceptibly, guitars skirt quietly on the spot, and Maal's limber, high and boomy grunh is the central musical fact, thrown boldly out across the (echo-chambered) air. Stepping deeper in, it's about dramas of flow and resistance, a clear stream's current breaking up into little eddies, brief patches of choppy turbulence.

The sleeve notes carefully translate each song at considerable length, and I've no doubt some people will draw comfort from the amiably concerned folk-poetic "content" therein, convincing themselves they're

listening for the right reasons. I'm further than ever from knowing what truly wrong reasons could be, anyway. All music is sometime only ambient, these days. Still, Maal's makes demands, if quiet ones, and they're worth agreeing to. MARK SINKER

MASQUALERO

Re-enter

ECM 1437 847 939 LP/CD

Re-enter is Masqualero's third album and their most challenging to date. But the challenges posed here rest heaviest on Nils Petter Molvær's trumpet and Tore Brunborg's tenor and soprano rather than with the listener. With just bass and drums in support, the Nordic impressionism that characterised *Bande A Part* and *Arvo* has, by abandoning harmony instruments, been replaced by a sort of maximum minimalism.

Such spartan accompaniment places these two young players in surroundings that are really the province of musicians who, to put it bluntly, are vastly more experienced than they. And certainly the most successful albums with horn and bass and drum accompaniment are almost exclusively the preserve of jazz's master musicians; a partial list might include albums by Ornette Coleman, Sonny Rollins, and David Murray.

What is refreshing is the player's willingness to expose themselves to such a searching environment in advance of artistic maturity. Certainly there are moments of cogency – "Re-Enter", "Lil' Lisa" and "Find Another Animal" contain episodes that might appear to justify this project. But too often the players rely on linear melodic movements that echo Garbarek's sound sculptures and the effect is rather static, despite Jon Christensen's animated percussion playing.

STUART NICHOLSON

BUTCH MORRIS

Dust To Dust

New World/Counter Currents 80408-2 CD

A COMPOSER composes, a conductor interprets – at least that's how convention would have it. Morris, thankfully, has little truck with convention. He is the consummate composer, at work with both the pen and the

baron. Neither instrument is deemed exclusive. His "conductors" are composed from the podium, using a unique and highly developed gestural language to sculpt and direct the flow of his improv orchestras.

Where his first recorded "conducton" (*Current Trends In Racism In Modern America – A Work In Progress*) was about creating movement from the moment, *Dust To Dust* allows itself a measure of predeterminedness, some of it conventionally notated, a lesser percentage electronically sampled. Far from being a retreat, Morris's introduction of thematic material presents even greater challenges, in unifying both set measures and spontaneous utterances.

The soulful "Via Talciona" is the pearl of this overtly tonal collection, a seamless and richly melodic workout which draws



heavily on the colour contrasts within Morris's 12-piece orchestra of winds, strings, keyboards, percussion and electronics. Contrastingly angular and aural, "The Bartok Improvisation" is a jarring, contrapuntal rhythmic attack built atop manipulated samples. Only the flurried activity of "Food Chain Dialogue", led by Myra Melford's keyboard splashes, veers close to free music orthodoxy. Otherwise, it's steeling, innovative and genuine new music which shines from this dust. DAVID ILIC

DAVID MURRAY

Live At The Peace Church

Daniel DA 001 LP

ANYBODY COMING fresh to David Murray

these days – having heard older bands talk about him as a great avant-gardist and the successor to Albert Ayler – could be forgiven for raising an eyebrow, tremendous fun though his work is now. Well, this tells you how that early analysis came about . . .

Recorded in 1976, in what appears to have been a fairly impromptu trio set (though Murray's partnership with bassist Fred Hopkins and pianist Stanley Crouch lasted on-and-off for years), the saxophonist's playing is quite torrential and thoroughly dangerous, taking the complex expressionism that Ayler somehow made emotionally immediate as his starting point (particularly this set recalls the Ayler trio of *Spiritual Unity* (July 1966, ESP 1002), early in the canon).

There are just three tracks, with little pause for reorganisation between them (the central one goes over the break between sides one and two and seriously makes a case for CD release). The thematic material is minimal; though it sets a mood, the progress of the improvising will enter a dozen or more emotional shifts during the performance, from a temporary serenity to a screaming melee, all with that strange inevitability that convinces you that it might equally have gone in several other directions at different points and still come out right. Whatever the circumstances, whatever the risks, there are moments when a musician can't go wrong: for Murray, this must have seemed like one.

I'd recommend you rush out and buy it, if I knew where you could get it – it's not the kind of Murray album you'll find at Our Price. If all else fails, try Danola itself, c/o Dan Serro, 165 William Street, New York NY 10038, USA.

JACK COOKE

AARON NEVILLE

Warm Your Heart

A&M 397 148-2 CD/MC/LP

To give up your soul to the Devil is one thing, to give it up to Linda Ronstadt is something else. The good news is that Aaron Neville, much-lauded falsetto voice of New Orleans' Neville Brothers, has made his first, full-length solo project in over 20 years. The bad news is that much of it sounds like an ultra-slick set of West Coast AOR.

Back in 1989 Neville recorded four duets

with Linda Ronstadt on her *Cry Like A Rainstorm - How Like The Wind* album and the resumption of that partnership is a determining factor on *Warm Your Heart*. Ronstadt not only duets with Neville on "Close Your Eyes" and joins (and arranges) the backing vocals on several tracks, she is also, more crucially, co-producer (with George Massenburg), the result being that *Warm Your Heart* sounds very much like a Ronstadt album on which Neville happens to sing lead vocals.

This is not to say it's not a pleasant album — a lot of tracks are very pretty, will probably go platinum and win buckles of Grammys — just that it has about as much soul as you'd find on an old Eagles or James Taylor LP. It has a lot of the same old session musicians too: the AOR masochists are out in force here — David Lindley, Larry Klein, Rita Coolidge, Bob Seeger, Jim Keltner, Russ Kunkel. Add to these a few prestigious guest slots by the likes of Ry Cooder, Dr John, Don Grolnick and Larry Carlton and you'll perhaps begin to realise how tasteful, decorous and totally vacuous this album can sound at times.

Neville sings beautifully throughout, but with a curious air of detachment. The appeal of his voice is the liquid purity of the sound, and I'm not sure that he's actually a great singer. He's certainly not a very expressive one — he often sounds more earnest than emotional — and the sanitized bucklings only underline the lack of grit or grain in these songs. Most irritating, though, is the clumsy, on-the-beat drumming on some tracks: you can tell after a few beefy thwacks that these are ageing white rockers at play.

I daresay Ronstadt had only good intentions, but for soul purists like myself, *Warm Your Heart* is well along the road to hell. Rack it up next to *Charlie Parker With Strings* or Youssou N'Dour with Peter Gabriel and weep at the way Western commercial culture fucks up everything it touches.

GRAHAM LOCK

MICHAEL NYMAN

String Quartets 1-3

Argo 433 093 CD/MLP

MICHAEL NYMAN'S music is now a seriously commercial proposition. Few string quartet recitals could bring the style generation out in such force as did the Balanescu's recent

South Bank concerts. Much of this popularity is evidently due to Nyman's long-term collaboration with Peter Greenaway, and the exposure of his music in Greenaway's stately designer tableaux. In 1989 Nyman got to write for a very different kind of film-making — Agnieszka Potrowski's documentary on the aftermath of the Armenian earthquake — and his beautiful choral work, *Out Of The Rain*, was the result. At the end of the year the Romanian revolution prompted Nyman to comply with Alexander Balanescu's suggestion of turning the piece into a string quartet.

That third quartet contains Nyman's trademarks of repetition and strong rhythms but is unusually elegant, and even divorced from the images of Potrowski's documentary or the Romanian news footage it is a deeply



moving work.

The second quartet was written for Shobana Jeyasingh's fine dance piece *Miniatures* which, in its revised form, *Configurations*, was given a networking on *Eastern Eye* last year before the slot was occupied by the eternal *Mahabharat*. Nyman succeeded in remaining unmistakably himself whilst evoking and appropriately complementing the essence of South Indian dance.

The first quartet dates from 1985. It borrows from the string quartet literature as well as the works of John Bull: low-brows like me insist on recognising one of these fragments as "Unchained Melody".

The textual tightness of Nyman's writing and the intensity of the playing by the Balanescu Quartet give a timbral compression which, despite digital technology, make

this recording sound like one by the Busch Quartet. As Busch set a standard of power performance which has seldom been emulated, that'll pass for a recommendation.

BARRY WITHERDEN

ANTHONY ORTEGA

New Dance!

Int ART CD 6066 CD

IF SOMEONE played you this and told you it had been recorded last year you'd be impressed by the immediacy and depth of reference it contained. In fact, the music here is around a quarter of a century old (recorded in 1966 and 1967) . . .

But if it was skill that enabled alto saxophonist Ortega to project his playing into the future it was bad luck that found him doing it for a small California label — Revelation — that consigned his work to the rare-record lists almost before it was released.

Four tracks are with bassist Bobby West and drummer Bill Goodwin, and in this format the relationship in the trio Ortega then led (David Izenzon and Charles Moffett) is unmistakable. The other four involve duos with bassist Chuck Domanico which recall Eric Dolphy's work in such a setting.

The bebop origins show at times, Ortega can remind you of Jackie McLean's excursions into freer forms, but although they share that thinking-it-through-harmonically (rather than melodically) quality, Ortega shows the better grasp of the kind of time needed to make the music flow.

His control of range on his instrument is remarkable: at the start of "New Dance" you'd think it was a tenor, and he moves easily into the upper reaches. His choice of material is equally wide: Cole Porter's "I Love You" is beautifully worked from its origins into a free discussion with Domanico, while Henry Mancini's "Tis Autumn" is an even rarer choice. It's partly this imaginative programme that makes the music work so well overall.

JACK COOKE

IVO PAPASOV

Balkanology

Haensel HNBL 1363 CD/MLP

IF YOU go back far enough, music from most

cultures starts to sound alike. Much Medieval European music, at least as it has been realised by modern scholars and practitioners, sounds similar to the current music of the Middle East. It may be that by the same European music started to be noticed the Islamic influence was so pervasive that everywhere from Spain to North Africa to Northern India had been affected by it. Or it may be that music was still close enough to some common root that its similarities were more marked than its differences. Whatever, Balkan musics have many of the characteristics of Arab musics.

Ivo Papasov appears at the Jazz Cafe. His albums get reviewed, played and stocked alongside jazz records because of the supposed jazz-like elements in his music. There were, perhaps, suspicions of jazz influence in the London gigs last New Year, but not on this record. I thought I heard the occasional hint of a Caribbean-sounding rhythm here and there, but clearly any other influence is considerably less important than that of the continuing, living tradition of Bulgarian folk music.

Papasov's sound is dominated by the reed (clarinet, sax and accordion) backed up by a more "Western", more "modern" rhythm section and, on some tracks, the remarkable, spine-tingling voice of Maria Karasekova. Her singing, even more than the instrumental dance forms, seems to echo across centuries of tradition, let alone geographical distances.

The band plays short melodic fragments fast and without pause so that endless, flowing, sinuous lines are created over complex, stick-tangling rhythms which sound as if they would stumble were it not for their crazy momentum and sheer exuberance.

Papasov's appearance in a *Rhythms Of The World* programme prompted massive interest. So should this album.

BARRY WITHERDEN

KEN PEPLOWSKI QUINTET

Illuminations

Concord C-4449 CD/MC

BILLIE HOLIDAY cut the ballad "Did I Remember" – composed, with its very slight lyrics, for a movie musical – in 1936. Artie Shaw contributed a fine and long solo on

clarinet. But in his 1990 re-evocation of that number, and of the era from which it dares, it's the cooler, virtuoso Benny Goodman that Ken Peplowski takes as his model.

That number is one of the most successful on *Illuminations*, with thoughtful contributions also from Junior Mance on piano and Howard Alden on guitar. Other pretty recreations include Harold Arlen's "Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea", Louis Armstrong's ballad "If We Never Meet Again", and the Ellington/Strayhorn "Someday". Though Peplowski plays alto and tenor sax on this album, it's his facile and fluid clarinet that impresses.

It's now fashionable to give critical credence to the Swing Era *dernier-garde* of Scott Hamilton, Peplowski, Vache et al. If bebop can be preserved in the post-modernist mix,

story" in which Russian traditional folk song could be kept alive and reinterpreted, Pokrovsky's ensemble here concentrates on the music of a relatively small region in Southern Russia between (east/west) the Don and the Dnieper and (north/south) Moscow and the Ukraine. Known as the 'wild field' because of its lack of protective natural barriers, the region has developed a music rich in resonance, sedentary but laced with melancholy.

Wedding songs utilising natural symbols, communal songs marking elemental events such as solstices, epics involving mythical metamorphoses are all sung with informal but highly musical verve and commitment. For 'world-music' listeners, perhaps the most convenient link with things slightly more familiar is with Bulgarian traditional music. The two musics share both a keening tone highly effective in the raising of neck-hair and a certain determination in the constant confrontation of adversity, whether natural or man-made. But the Russian also exhibits occasional similarities with Gregorian chants and evinces the odd, fascinating pre-echo of Russian classical composers like Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev.

CHRIS PARKER

TITO PUENTE

Out Of This World

Concord Picante CCD-6448 CD/MC

THE MUSIC of the veteran Cuban timbalero and vibes player Tito Puente long since retreated from the vanguard of the Latin Jazz tradition. Over the last decade or so his many recordings for the Concord Picante label have crystallised around a specific formula, combining a small handful of Latinized jazz standards with lengthy percussion workouts, soft-hearted boleros and recycled Barrio classics like "Oye Como Va". *Out Of This World* is no exception in this respect.

Pre-production values on Concord releases have never been high and here the arrangements to such tunes as "SWonderful" and "In Walked Bud" barely exist, even as afterthoughts. In any event, they are played blind by a group that includes such veterans of Latin crossover as Mario Rivera, Bobby Rodriguez and Sonny Bravo. Once we're in the solos, however, it's the performances of these same players that ultimately capsizes the MOR tendencies in Puente's music.



why not Swing or anything else for that matter? But bebop irrevocably broadened the expressive resources of jazz – rhythmic, harmonic, melodic – and for young players to ignore its advances seems like rejecting Classical forms in favour of Baroque. It's interesting to see it done, but when I hear the "Hor Club Quartet" chug of Alden's rhythm guitar on the up-tempo numbers, and Alan Dawson's subdued drumming, I have my doubts...

ANDY HAMILTON

DMITRI POKROVSKY

ENSEMBLE

The Wild Field

Real World RW 17 CD/MC/LP

FORMED IN 1975 to provide a 'living labora-



To understand how the percussionist has maintained an audience beyond the aesthetic cul-de-sac of Radio Two and *Cow Dung*, check these highlights: Bravo's outrageously conceived piano onslaught during the measured ambience of "Amanecer Guajira"; Michael Turre's booming baritone on "One Of This World"; the drama of the same track's piano/bass/vibes introduction; the *guaguanco* interludes during "Sweet Georgia Brown"; and the leader's still resonant timbales work, dominating the two descargas that frame this predictable but enjoyable session.

TONY HERRINGTON

DJANGO REINHARDT*Swing In Paris 1936-1940*

Affinity AFS1095-5 CD

DJANGO FANS need only be told that this five CD set comprises all the recordings the guitarist made between 1936 and 1940. The sound is excellent and every session detail is painstakingly noted (though split, annoyingly, between the set's accompanying booklet and the back of each CD jewel case).

In *Worx 84* Martin Gayford outlined the case for Django as the sole European who has had an impact on the development of jazz. His playing is always a pleasure, flexing a steel-spring confidence and glee. He is great at chordal distortion too, his flamenco panache rifling behind a soloist like an entire horn section. The clarity of his playing makes Django a candidate for guitarist's guitarist, a 1930s John McLaughlin. But like McLaughlin, disinterest in the specific timbral voicing of the blues makes his playing sound somewhat dated. He uses the vibrato beloved of pre-War singers and string players; there is none of the harmonic experimentation that makes Charlie Christian seem our contemporary.

The great tragedy for Django was, perhaps, his association with violinist Stephane Grapelli. Eddie South replaces Grapelli for a few numbers, and suddenly it is jazz rather than period nostalgia.

The much-vaunted recordings with the visiting jazzmen—Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter, Dickie Wells—are an improvement. Mu-so-listening, which shrugs off the total effect of music in order to admire the technical nuts and bolts, has a lot of time for

Django. Non-playing listeners might prefer the OKeh Western Swing collection.

BEN WATSON

EMILY REMLER*Retroactive Vol One: Standards*

Concord CCD-4453 CD

THEIR much Jewish girl from New Jersey who felt like a 50-year-old black man with a big thumb left us a handful of fine records and the promise of many more when she died last year. Carl Jefferson likes guitarists in a classic, Montgomery style—Cal Collins, Herb Ellis, Howard Alden. He recorded Emily with sympathy and intelligence, and the sound on this CD is a beautiful piece of recording: the soft burr of her ballad playing



balances with the tough, singular attack she brought to bop pieces such as "Hot House" and "Daahoud". She was a valuable talent, and losing her is made to seem worse by this compilation's unfussy excellence: all the performances have a lean and clear-headed eloquence.

Her best record was surely the scintillating quartet date with Hank Jones, Smitty Smith and Buster Williams, *East Is West*, and that's represented here by "Daahoud" and the superb transformation of "Softly, As In A Morning Sun", with its arching bass line made into the hypnotic centre of the piece. Four other sessions are represented, all of them holding their merits. Remler's playing isn't based on knockout virtuosity, which is why her two duets with Larry Coryell work so well: her more elemental solos stand in

fine relief with Coryell's steely picking, and the dense and unexpectedly dark reading of "How Insensitive" must be among the most profound treatments of that bittersweet Jobim theme. She isn't exactly bluesy, more at one with blues necessities: the filigree improvising, the unsentimental harmonies and somber way with time.

Other favourite: "In Your Own Sweet Way". It's easy to overplay Beulbeck's charming tune, and Emily never did that. A compilation that's a fine place to get to know her music.

RICHARD COOK

ROGER REYNOLDS*Whispers Out Of Time & Transfigured**Wind II*

New World 80401-2 CD

ROGER REYNOLDS is an unusually experimental composer to have won a Pulitzer Prize, which he did in 1989 for *Whispers Out Of Time*. Based on John Ashberry's poem *Self-Portrait In A Convex Mirror* (much of his work has been prompted by literary sources), it is scored for string orchestra and four soloists, including contrabass.

Its six sections add up to an austere, tightly-constructed, but continually surprising work, rarely performed by the San Diego Symphony Ensemble under Harvey Sollberger. The composer makes challenging use of unconventional sonorities, and achieves striking effects by having the soloists echo orchestral phrases in oblique or distorted fashion.

Despite its allusions to Mahler and Beethoven, *Whispers Out Of Time* is a very American work. *Transfigured Wind II*, performed by the same orchestral forces, is considerably more European in feel, partly due to its IRCAM connections, where Reynolds developed its complex techniques in *Archipelago* (1983).

Briefly, he taped Sollberger (also a flautist) playing the solo flute parts, which he then analyzed on computer, and abstracted the additional elements which the performer had added to the notation. These are present both as tape music and as a basis for the orchestral writing, while flautist John Fonville performs the original solo parts.

The resulting piece makes excellent use of dynamic contrasts and a greatly enlarged sound palette, and is a fine example of

Reynolds's fascination with electronic media, and the ways in which the human mind intersects with music and technology.

KENNY MATTHEWS

**PAQUITO D'RIVERA,
ARTURO SANDOVAL**

Reunion

Mercury 15805 CD/LP

EXILED CUBAN saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera is on something of a roll as far as his recent music goes. *Reunion* is yet another flawless collection of contemporary jazz fusion executed from a pan-Latin perspective.

Critics of such music often focus on its supposed lack of depth and its intellectual vacuity. *Reunion* offers up musicians with sufficiently advanced artistic impulses to defuse such lofty assumptions. The leader's alto and clarinet offer particularly trenchant focal points, applying the drive and flexibility of a Benny Carter with the populist conceptions of a Cannonball Adderley. Arturo Sandoval has been the front-line partner to such performances for around 30 years now. Here he subverts his usual grandstanding tendencies to produce a series of consonant, portmanteau-like solos. Guitarist Fared Haque is a relative novice in such company but he takes his solo opportunities with relish, combining an active understanding of Latin rhythms with some fluent harmonic ideas.

The actual material mixes up some buoyant Cuban and Brazilian influenced originals with a long, tense take on Dizzy Gillespie's "Tanga" and a canorous version of the Chucho Valdés bolero "Claudia". On some tracks the crossover elements have a vaguely anachronistic quality – the vocals on "Caprichoso De La Habana", for instance, are very 70s – but otherwise this is a good follow-up to D'Rivera's recent *Tico Tico* and Latin Jazz Quintet releases.

TONY HERRINGTON

SHORTY ROGERS

Shorty Rogers Swings

Bluebird NDB3012 CD/LP/MC

It used to be *de rigueur* to put down the West Coast sound which Shorty Rogers exemplified (one critic even compared it unfavourably with Elvis Presley) but there was much

good music produced under his leadership. Taking his cue from Miles's *Birds Of The Cool* (strange to find these timeless masterpieces labelled "quaint" in *Wire* 80), Rogers produced a series of big band arrangements in the 50s that were themselves influential.

That's not to say the standard was uniformly high. Bluebird have remastered (not brilliantly – the bass is much too high in the mix) a set of RCA recordings from 1958-9, featuring familiar LA names like the Candoli brothers, Bill Holman, Butney Kessel and Bud Shank. The result is uneven. The reason why the music suddenly picks up after track 13 becomes apparent after looking at the composer credits. Earlier numbers are by a team of Robert Allen and the aptly-named Al Stillman (pretty stiff musically too), who must have gone on to compose some great



TV signature tunes and quiz show music. Harold Arlen classics like "My Shining Hour" and "Get Happy" form the later part of the programme, and the soloists raise their game accordingly.

The highlight has to be a long feature for the fluffy-toned Jimmy Giuffre clarinet on the extended "Blues In The Night". Wonderful Richie Kamuca solos on some earlier tracks. A concerted "That Old Black Magic" concludes a nostalgic re-issue.

ANDY HAMILTON

DAVID SANBORN

Another Hand

Reprise 7559 610882 CD/MC/LP

ANYONE WHO missed the Sanborn of, say,

Gil Evans's *Prunes* album will rejoice at the arrival of his most straight-ahead set for a long time. If *Clean Up* took the crisp Marcus Miller funk to its furthest extreme, this record turns everything around. At first listen, it's almost like an ECM date, full of reverberant space, wide-bodied bass and drums and a central role for the leader that gives him the broadest canvas to work on (Hal Willner produced, aside from one track by Miller).

Actually, with Bill Frisell whining alongside the leader for much of the first half, I was reminded most of Paul Motian's group, especially as Jack DeJohnette approaches the kind of limber free time that Motian loves. Charlie Haden has as much room as anybody, and he plays as unfettered as he does with Ornette: hear the strange solo he puts into "The Lonely", where the recording is so clear you can apparently hear him grunting. Very real-time. The compositions are a rather slow and stately group, with only "Hobbies" picking its feet up, an elliptical riff stretched over a soul-jazz backbeat (very groovy bass here). "Jesus" sounds like one of Marc Ribot's pieces (he's the other guitarist here, though he has less to do than Frisell), while a couple of tunes – "Come To Me, Nina" and "Cee" – sound like acoustic variations on Sanborn's slow-funk catalogue. Frisell's "Monica Jane" gets a lansuping feel thanks to DeJohnette's parading drums.

There must have been a few hearts fluttering at Reprise when Sanborn delivered this set. He sounds exceptionally involved throughout, the staccato rips and fills of his last work traded for languor, luxuriant melody, and the sense that he loves to just bathe in his own sound, that gorgeously squeezed alto timbre that still sounds like nobody else. It's easy to feel disappointed about him giving up, for now, on the funk direction, if only because nobody else was doing that as well as him. But this pretty, sensuous record is a very fair trade.

MIKE FISH

SHANKAR

M.R.C.S.

ECM 1405 CD/MC/LP

THE INDIAN violinist L. Shankar is, like saxophonists Jan Garbarek and John Surman,



one of those musicians who can hold and entrance a listener by the sheer grandeur of his sound alone. On *M.R.C.S.* (no explanation is given), he weaves an enchanting sound world from some very simple raw material, with his self-invented double-necked electric violin at its centre.

It was originally recorded as a solo project, with Shankar playing against a drum machine. Subsequently, however, he decided to re-record with tabla maestro Zakir Hussain and Vilku Vinayakram on ghatam, and threw in drummer Jon Christensen (and a brief contribution from an uncredited piano player) for good measure.

The contrast between Christensen's malleability and the equally flexible but more rigorously determined patterns of the Indian percussionists is fascinating, and their interplay adds a dimension no drum machine could have produced, although the violin's power is occasionally overwhelming.

The mood is distinctly reflective (listeners looking for the electrifying spontaneity of the Indian trio's live performance may be disappointed at just how reflective), and extremely subtle. If the material sounds a little slight at times, it is so in the context of an Indian tradition which celebrates the aesthetic pleasures of what, to Western ears, might seem almost indistinguishable gradations of melody and rhythm. **KENNY MATHIESON**

NINA SIMONE

The Blues

Novus BMG ND 83 101 CD

At the Village Gate

Boutique Jazz CD-ROU 1030 CD

I'VE NEVER really taken to Nina Simone. It's not that the voice is not conventionally beautiful so much as the way she often rides over the meaning of the words for the sake of some non-verbal trope. I'm an unreconstructed realist when it comes to songs: the thrill of a song is in the meaning of the words as much as the sound and rhythm, and Simone, like so many jazzier singers, has a tendency to treat the meaning as a secondary consideration.

Which is why I enjoy the 1966-71 anthology *The Blues*. The tracks are short, the length of a decent 45 – nothing longer than

4mins 50secs. This has the effect of reining in the Simone excesses, which won't please everybody, and tying her more closely to the song's sense. On most tracks the group is a sextet, with a slightly irritating sub-blues harmonica, and on some tracks there are horns to fill the spaces around the Simone voice. The track which works best is her version of the country song "You Turn Me On", where the voice goes deliberately (I assume) flat to match the laconic rapture of the lyric. Needless to say there's a version of "House Of The Rising Sun" (composer credit going to Alan Price here, which is perverse), but it's a bit of a heartless thrash.

On the 1961 live Village Gate collection, the same song (*before* The Animals did it) becomes a sedate and subtle waltz, and the effect is delightful. But overall this is the



more conventionally unconventional Simone, playing with a quartet only, as her fans like her. Even a sceptic like me can't deny the artistry, the rhythmic imagination, the angry edge that makes every love song sound like threat. But to my ears there's nothing to match the pressurised grace of "You Turn Me On". **NICK KIMBERLEY**

DOUG SNYDER/BOB THOMPSON

The Ruler Of Play

New Frontiers 3 MC

Robots

New Frontiers 6 MC

In some parallel universe, Sonny Sharrock,

Robert Wyatt, Adrian Belew, Joey Baron and everyone who's ever been in Test Department, Faust, Hawkwind and AMM met and formed a rather large rock band. In our continuum, we have Snyder (guitars, MIDI guitars and keyboards) and Thompson (drums, percussion, occasional voice) producing this rhythmic, pacy, spacy, grungy, riff-driven rockoid improvised music.

It's heady stuff, too. And, as if the music wasn't enough, every aspect of the production of these cassettes – recording quality, manufacturing, graphics, printing – has been executed to an almost eccentrically high standard which makes 'professional' quality seem laughable. These musical associations go back a long way. So does their attitude, emphasising interaction and spontaneity with no trace of cynicism.

The Snyder/Thompson collective CV covers a suitably romantic mish-mash of people and places, including CBGB's, Pharaoh Sanders, Dave Valentine, Max's Kansas City, Scoo Cossu, Sich Dick and the Volkswagens, Muddy Waters Jr and Bill Laswell (sic[k], sic, sic). It doesn't, however, suggest how to get hold of these tapes, so I'd suggest writing to their label, New Frontiers (their logo bears an unfortunate resemblance to that of the National Front), at PO Box 426, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387. And if anyone at Recommended Distribution or Impetus is reading this ...

TOM CORBIN

MARK SPRINGER

Menus

Venue 907 CD/DMC

AT 73 minutes a long solo set from the former Rip, Rig & Panic pianist, with each short track – there are 20 of them – bleeding into the next. By my count 13 pieces reveal the influence of the Keith Jarrett of the *Sax Boss Concerto* era in the harmonies, general limpidity, and consonance. It is pretty listening, then, if hardly a very varied "menu", but lacks the extravagant melodic invention that usually makes Jarrett's piano music more than just pretty.

Two tracks, "Stringbreaker" and "Camp Hand" make a cursory nod to Cecil Taylor – the same cursory nod that Jarrett makes, come to think of it, dangerously close to caricature. "Ticklish Locusts", with its pre-

cisely articulated minimalistically-insistent ripple, and "Shook The Atmosphere", heavy on the sustain, pushing clouds of overtones around, are vaguely reminiscent of Keith Tippett, another Bristol man.

Springer's taste puts him a cut above the more clurkless solo piano muddlers such as Jasper van't Hof or George Winston, but there's no getting around the hard fact that the territory is exhausted. There's a claim on every unsquare inch of the free and neo-free piano terrain between Paul Bley's plot and Cecil's, and Mark can't help but sound like a trespasser.

STEVE LAKE

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Nu Groove 25 West 38th: A Compilation
New Grove NGV 91 LP

SOMETIMES THEY play the repetition trick – deliberately – for so long, a single sampled beat-phrase over and over, with nothing to vary it, that you know the record's stuck. Or (more to the point) time itself. Lost in music: NuGroove, the American vanguard of underground House labels, wants your body to whirl and flutter off into vibrations, tremors, free electric pulsation. Force and flow (one early House unit called themselves – or their record – True Mathematics). Abstraction – awash with the ghosts of pop past and present, fingerprinted with electronic ink – has never been so bewitching.

This collection – three tracks a side, four sides – is an neat an exposition of how deeply and dizzily House explores sound as any hipster cyborg could ever hope for: Project 86's subliminal games with fake mains hum ("Legends"); Code 6's timbral serialism ("Quad 1"); Lisa Lee's pitchbend rap-chatter ("When Can I Call You"); Lost Entity's liquid dissolves ("Annihilate"); Power House's achingly beautiful xylophone line ("Kenny's Jazz"), with attendant wristwatch-tick robot zimshot (their xylophone? Kenny's? Flicked or faked? Who cares?); and so on and so on – cool this, minimalist that, systems the other, a Bonsai miniature in each cut, fashioned in tiny glass and steel, and replicated to delirious infinity.

After playing a record like this, every outworld sound – rough or smooth, real or make-believe – starts to call your name. No one is using technological resources more

intelligently, more profoundly, more completely, more passionately, more *plangent*. Keep music mechanoid.

MARK SINKER

VARIOUS

In Credo: Russian Chamber Music
Koch International Classics 310691 CD

DESPITE BEN Watson's caustic remarks (*Wire* 84), Alfred Schnittke shouldn't be seen simply as a great White Russian hope, rounding on seven decades of oppressive scientific materialism. Brian Ferneyhough and New Complexity can rest soundly in their beds; Schnittke's is in reality just another voice to add to post-modern 90s eclecticism.

The Cello Sonata must be one of his most

lines on cello. The rhapsodic mood shatters in vicious slashing lines rising to a climax, with stentorian chords in the iron voice. The piece closes with the cello taking over the bugle-call, to a numbing organ refrain. (I hope this isn't Edgar Krapp's Last Tape.) Music which slowly entices you into its mysterious, captivating world – a singular and strangely moving epiphany.

ANDY HAMILTON

JOHN ZORN

Filmworks 1986–1990
Wax/EVA 2024 CD

GENUINE SOUNDTRACKS to boot: three of them for the big screen, the fourth – a "fun-size" version of Ennio Morricone's *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* – intended for use in a cigarette commercial.

Filmworks is possibly Zorn's most conventional recording to date. Modes and moods are allowed to develop at a more leisurely pace, giving the music a different, expansive quality. All three major works allow Zorn the freedom to explore his multitudinous musical tastes – from post-bop, through dense gothic figures, to our rock, the latter predating his involvement with the hardcore scene.

Not all are blessed with the telling narrative qualities of some of his off-screen endeavours, such as the superlative B-movie spoof "Spillane": the six parts of "White And Lazy", with its rock-based assembly including guitarists Robert Quane and Arto Lindsay, bassist Melvin Gibbs and drummer Anton Fier, work better as stand-alones rather than pairworks, offering little clue as to the film's plot development. No such qualms, though, about either "The Golden Boat" (equally varied both form and mood) or the album's highlight, the graphic "She Must Be Seeing Things", with its solid jazz/blues core.

Zorn may not be the immediate successor to Morricone's crown but he more than passes for the modern-day Ellington, composing with a genuine feel and understanding of his musicians' strengths (the cast comprises his usual array of Downtown cohorts) and it's for that sterling ability that *Filmworks* demands your attention, even with its £15 Japanese import price tag.

DAVID ILIC



popular works; this is at least the third recording since its 1979 premiere. Here, it's taken at a cracking pace that cuts the 23 minutes of the Unicorn recording down to a mere 18. David Geringas (cello) and Tatjana Schatz (piano) conjure an eloquent, impassioned performance from this masterly, dark score. In contrast Victor Sosulin's *Sonata For Cello And Percussion* comes across as rather hard-boiled, and for once Arvo Part – *Spiegel im Spiegel* for cello and piano – is merely lightweight.

The most arresting sonorities, though, come from Schnittke's contemporary Sofia Gubaidulina. Piano is replaced by church organ (Edgar Krapp) on *In Credo (On The Cross)*, a "meditation on suffering". A repeating "bugle-call" motif on the organ responds in eerie counterpoint to mournful, sweeping

FASTLICKS



Ben Watson fast-forwards through a pick of new releases

JAC BERROCAL LA NUIT EST AU COURANT (*Adels* 590040). Thumping free-jazz/avant-funk courtesy Jac Berrocal's chattering trumpet, the twin double basses of Hubertus Bierman and Francis Marmande and excellent drums from Jacques Thollot. Trumpet with echo and wah wah and ocarinade are hardly original after Miles, but pitched into musicianship as heated and responsive it works. Purple lagoons and savage funk. Ambient improvisation for people with ears – Jon Hassell watch out.

JOHN COLTRANE THE COMPLETE COPENHAGEN CONCERT 20 NOVEMBER 1961 (*Magnitudo Recordi* MRCD116). Plurcinating levels, sound quality thin but listenable. "Delilah" and a half-hour "My Favourite Things". A previously unissued slice of the most important music this millennium. Go buy.

BOBBY HUTCHERSON OBLIQUE (*Blue Note* CDP7844442). Disappointing to hear the Thelonious Monk of the vibes (in 1966, a mere three years after the epochal *Our Town*) drift into tedious jazz impressionism – probably courtesy pianist Herbie Hancock. Drummer Joe Chambers saves the disc with two urgent, provocative compositions that fly the flag of Blue Note modernism, Hutchinson rediscovering his special mix of angles and evocation. Ouch!

LEOS JANACEK JOURNAL D'UN DISPARU, KREUTZER QUARTET (*Arred* 220312). Dated inter-war piece for two singers at the pianoforte, followed by a timely reminder to those who follow the "trail-breaking" Kronos String Quartet that romantic proto-modernism was more convincing *first time round*. Less fulsome than the Smetana Quartet's Supraphon recording, its bleached-out sensitivity develops a Mahlerian mystery. Lovely.

GASPER LAWAL KADARA (*Globestyle* CD08B071). For a fusion date, this has some weird bass lines. As Nigerian dance music it sounds tame, ironed out. Bland production and John Glyn's session tenor sax do not help. In Africa, choral sweetness fights the deprivation of everyday life: on a digital platter it merely lacks flavour. Corporate art for worldmusic consumers

ROSCOE MITCHELL SONGS IN THE WIND (*Vista* CD011). The Art Ensemble's understated saxophonist in a variety of situations. Mitchell's solo soprano is devastating, an individual strain to rival that of Anthony Braxton or Lol Coxhill. His trio with Varian Manoogian (violin) and Steve Sylvester (bicycle-powered lion's roar that sounds like



a subdued didjeridoo) provides the "open" Chicago moments, though without the raw presence that makes such art worth the artiness. The duets with drummer Vincent Davis are heady freejazz, and when bassist Richard Davis guest on one track it is sublime. Frustrating, because this latter trio could evidently cut a killer 60 minutes on CD.

M'LUMBO LIFE AFTER DEATH (*Maître'd* MD105CD). Cool ethnic versions of TV themes. Not as weird as Sun Ra or even Can, but with its bright moments, especially the stylophone rendition of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" might heavy toms. No brilliant player steps forward to turn clowning into passion (as Rich Underhill does with the

Shuffle Demons, for example).

PAUL PLIMLEY/LISLE ELLIS BOTH SIDES OF THE SAME MIRROR (*9WIndy* NWCD0135). Classy free improvisation from the Canadian duo. Plimley has his own piano voice, pitched somewhere between Don Pullen and Colton Narcarow, but his declamatory relentlessness is wearing: no "comping" sections to let the blues unconscious speak. Bassist Lisle Ellis is funky and free sensuality, but Plimley will not let him fly.

GIAINTO SCESI URQUALIA, HYMNO, CHUKRUM (*Acord* 201112). The best thing about Scesi is his awareness of how classical composition evolves to emotive noise. He was part of the same coterie as Ennio Morricone, standing in relation to him as the Situationists did to Punk: the articulate, subversive ancestor to the vital populism. These orchestral works (1960–3) replace the raw-pitched urgency of his chamber music with a mighty feel for instrumental colour Wagner without the helmets. Stomking.

JOE VANENKHUIZEN BLUES AHEAD (*Timeless* CDSJP356). Holland is blessed with a tenor saxophonist who really can play with the grit of Gene Ammons. Choosing to record with Hammond organist Carlo Dweys and freejazz drummer Han Bennink was a master-stroke. This is vivid, smoky groove-juice, its relaxed liberty with the form as surprising as its power.

IANNAIS XENAKIS PLEIADES (*BIS* CD482). Strange how the New Complexity composers, virulently anti-minimal to a fault, all name-check Xenakis, who makes precisely the same mistake as minimalism: he sentimentalizes the idea of natural sound. Music for people who love their Body Shop door chimes, noise for those who never found Rock 'n' Roll or Elvin Jones. The Kroumata Percussion Ensemble are recorded less resonantly than the previous version by Les Percussions de Strasbourg on Harmonia Mundi, and they play a bit faster. This is the sound of Sunday bells when you have a hangover. Horrible.



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Marc Johnson



Gary Thomas While The
Gate Is Open
8344391 (LP) 8344392 (CD)
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Rosnes, Dave Holland, Anthony
Cox & Dennis Chambers



Cassandra Wilson She Who
Weeps
8344431 (LP) 8344432 (CD)
8344434 (MC)
With Rod Williams, Kevin
Bruce Harris, Tim Tabell,
Mark Johnson a.o.



Tim Berne's Caso Tocale
Face Yourself
8344422 (CD)
With Steve Swell, Bobby
Previte, Marc Ducret, Mark
Desser & Herb Robertson



Robin Eubanks KARMA
8344462 (CD)
With Renee Rosnes, Greg Osby,
Lonnie Plasencia, Marvin "Smitty"
Smith a.o.



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OUTLINES I

BAROQUE

Graham Lock turns a seasonal ear to recent releases by Antonio Vivaldi and Georg Philipp Telemann, two early 18th Century composers whose reputations have undergone dramatic changes in the last 250 years.

THE ONE statistic that everyone seems to know about classical music is that Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* is now the most-recorded item in the catalogue. Strange to think that Vivaldi died in poverty in 1741 and within 50 years had been virtually forgotten, a state of affairs that did not change significantly until the last few decades. I suspect that, as late as the mid-60s, the name "The Four Seasons" meant "Sherry", "Big Girls Don't Cry" and Frankie Valli to considerably more people than it meant Antonio Vivaldi.

The sudden, enormous popularity of *The Four Seasons* is no bad thing, but there is a lot more to Vivaldi's music than those four violin concertos. I had hoped that this year – the 250th anniversary of his death – would see some major new releases of his work, but to date the only large-scale project to appear has been the Philips 12-volume, mid-price reissue of his *Opus 1-12* and these, alas, are fairly ordinary performances of what are anyway amongst his better-known works. Particularly disappointing is the lack of Vivaldi operas on CD. The only recent release in this genre is *L'Olimpiade* (Clemencic Consort/René Clemencic, two-CD set on Nuova Era), in which some fine music is half-spotted by occasionally overwrought singing and by a dodgy live recording, complete with coughing audience, rustling scores and a curious mix in which the basso continuo chugs along a shade too emphatically at times.

What makes this lack especially frustrating is the brilliance of *Orlando Furioso*, one of the few Vivaldi operas which *has* appeared on CD – in a superb performance by Claudio Scimone, I Solisti Veneti and a star-studded cast of singers led by Marilyn Horne (three-CD set, on Erato). The richly dramatic recitative and mix of both decorous and powerful arias make *Orlando* a gripping work, its highly-charged currents of desire, jealousy and madness pierced by exquisite

moments of dreamy rapture.

Two new Vivaldi releases I can recommend are the two-CD set of *Complete Cello Sonatas* by Anthony Pleeth and the latest volume of *Bassoon Concerti* by Daniel Smith, both on the ASV label. Vivaldi wrote extensively for the cello but it is perhaps in his nine sonatas that the full range of lyrical expressiveness he found in the instrument can best be heard. The sonatas are all cast in a slow/fast/slow/fast pattern, the fast movements distinguished by a crisp, elegant urgency, the longer slow movements directly addressing the heart with grave tenderness. Anthony Pleeth, an ex-member of both The Academy Of Ancient Music and The English Concert and one of the UK's leading period-instrument cellists, plays these pieces with the requisite degree of gracefulness and a rare



depth of feeling.

Vivaldi also wrote prolifically for the bassoon, including 37 concertos – more than he wrote for any other solo instrument save the violin – and Daniel Smith's survey of the complete set has now reached its penultimate issue with volume five. I've long been an admirer of Smith's warmly engaging versions of these works and the fifth volume, while offering no new profundities nor any surprises to match volume three's exuberantly imagistic "La Nuit", provides a further 60 minutes of pleasurable listening.

Vivaldi's contemporary Georg Philipp Telemann is another composer with whose reputation fate has played strange tricks. In his day, Telemann was considered a finer composer than Bach, whereas now, when he's thought of at all it's usually as a minor and

lightweight talent. Well, I beg to differ and call in evidence two outstanding new releases – *Ino* (Barbara Schlick/Musica Antiqua Köln/ Richard Goebel, on Archiv) and *La Changuante* (Collégium Musicum 90/Simon Standage, on Chandos).

The cantata "Ino", composed in 1765 when Telemann was 84 years old, is arguably his most dramatic and impressive vocal work, a tour de force for the soprano soloist, with two major da capo arias that lend it an almost operatic grandeur without in the least detracting from the music's crackling pace and energy. Schlick's performance is flawless – even when required to leap over a cliff halfway through! – and Goebel's ensemble display the high degree of care and expertise which they brought to their previous Telemann recordings – of the *Tafelmusik* and *Wassermusik* – on Archiv. The coupling here is the seven-part *Overture In D Major*, also from 1765, and Telemann's last completed instrumental piece (he died in 1767). Like "Ino", it shows his ability – remarkable for an octogenarian – to blend elements of late Baroque with the newer *style galant* that heralded the transition to Early Classical.

La Changuante offers further proof of his multifaceted talents; the title-track is an orchestral suite in the French style, the remaining five tracks are violin concertos based on the Italian model established, in part, by Vivaldi (though Telemann likes to employ more structural diversity than his Venetian counterpart). Telemann's gift for melody and his inventive harmonic sense are well to the fore – try the *Concerto For Four Violins Unaccompanied* or the Adagio of the *Flute And Violin Concerto* where a lovely flute line winds through pizzicato strings – and even his most stately music is serenaded by a sense of gaiety and wit. *La Changuante* marks an auspicious recording debut for Collégium Musicum 90, the new group formed by Simon Standage, lead violin with The English Concert.

Postscript: newcomers to Telemann looking for an inexpensive sampling of his music could try the bargain-price collection of *Requie Sante, Visita Concerto* and two *Tafelmusik* concertos by Capella Istropolitana/Richard Erdlinger on Naxos or the set of *Doppelkonzerte* on original instruments by Concentus musicus Wien/Nikolaus Harnoncourt on Teldec's mid-price Reference label.



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OUTLINES 2

BLUES

Mike Aitkenhead woke up this morning, found himself reviewing a new slew of live blues

LIVE ALBUMS have always veered wildly in quality between those cut on a 32-track mobile facility and those cut on a one-track facility on someone's knee in row 11. To avoid disappointment it's politic to stick with a label you can trust — Alligator, with their 100% value productions, have set the standards in recent years, but there's evidence that Rooster Blues are catching up.

That evidence consists of Eddy Clearwater's *Real Good Time* Live set issued here by Bedrock. Some London gigs ten years ago showed the lanky Chicagoan Clearwater to be a lively performer who was happiest doing Chuck Berry pastiches: he made a strong album, *The Clif*, for Rooster at the time, and a weaker one, *Flimsoar*, a few years later, but the new one is his best sustained piece of work to date.

Fronting a piledriving band in which pianist Allen Barnes and drummer Tim Austin are the stars, he romps through 63 minutes of powerfully-played, crisply-recorded blues which show his continuing skill as an entertainer and his increasing authority as a singer and guitarist. The Chuck Berry influence still manifests itself on "Real Good Time", but there are also spirited renditions of two Jimmy Reed songs, "I'll Change My Style" and "Two Ways To Skin A Cat" (which he increases to three ways, a sure sign of inflation), a Joe Turner melody under the title of "I'll Yo Silver", a nod to James Brown on the grinding, chattering "Get Off On The Blues" and even a shot at the Spaniels' "Good Night Sweetheart" on which the bass voice is fine but the harmonies decidedly are not. A handful of Clearwater's own songs complete a CD which exudes both the toughness and the warmth of his music.

B B King must have lost count of the number of live albums that he's recorded. *Live At The Regal* and his London concert with The Crusaders immediately come to mind. These days, economic conditions usually limit his touring band to eight pieces, but in 1990 he undertook a prese-

gious 20-date international tour with Philip Morris's star-studded 17-piece outfit which included Ray Brown, Plas Johnson and Kenny Burrell. This agglomeration, honed by weeks on the road together, ended their odyssey at Harlem's Apollo Theatre where the CD *Live At The Apollo* (GRP) was recorded.

Anyone who has seen BB will recognise many of the staples of his act: his hits like "Sweet Sixteen", "The Thrill Is Gone" and "Paying The Cost". But the way in which they are performed is less familiar. King never plays less than immaculately, but this show is something else. Perhaps it's because of the venue, the greatest black music theatre in the world; maybe it's because the quality of the band spurs him on. But these performances from the 64-year-old King have a bite,



vitality and authority which are astounding. His guitar Lucille unleashes achingly sustained notes of burnished blue, and all the time the band is right there with the big, bullocking horn lines you want to hear. A triumphant evening which transfers well to disc, with not one of its 44 minutes wasted.

In the 1960s two Germans, Lippmann and Rau, brought a varied group of blues musicians to Europe each year under the banner of the American Folk Blues Festival, though the "folk" connection was often tenuous as the artists ranged from cottonpickin' pluckers to city slickers. They have now begun reissuing the albums made during the tours on their L&R label, available both on LP and CD. Last year saw the 1962, '63 and '64 sets, with pride of place going to the '63 package headlined by Matt Murphy, Memphis Slim

and Sonny Boy Williamson. Now the albums from the subsequent three years have re-emerged.

The 1965 set is, one discovers upon reading the small print, a studio recording, and it achieves clean sound at the expense of a certain loss of atmosphere. Eddie Boyd, Jimmy Lee Robinson and even Big Mama Thornton come across as rather lacklustre, but John Lee Hooker is his usual menacing self on "King Of The World"; Fred McDowell plays bottleneck guitar with relish on "Highway 61" and Buddy Guy's playing and singing are impassioned on his renowned "First Time I Met The Blues". One-man-band Doctor Ross conveys an authentic Delta feel even in a German studio, but the disc's most precious moment as Walter Horton's shimmering harp behind J B Lenoir on "Slow Down".

The following year's package is historic in itself, being probably the first blues concert ever staged in East Berlin. Its 45 minutes contain music which is more uniform in standard than its predecessor, though not in form. here, cheek by jowl, are the warm joieulity of Roosevelt Sykes, the stately piano of Little Brother Montgomery, the impassioned Chicago guitar and singing of Otis Rush whose "My Own Fault" is as highlight, the rhythmic hump and streetwise vocals of Junior Wells and the back-country blues of Robert Pete Williams and Sleepy John Estes. However, the flat-footed, shoulders-back K C blues shouting of Big Joe Turner knocks the socks off the other artists as he rolls his way through "Flip Flop And Fly" and "Roll 'Em Pete" (the part of Pete is played by Roosevelt Sykes).

The 1967 edition has, with the exception of folksy favourites Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, a splendid line-up: Son House somberly performing his "Death Letter", Skip James, Bukka White, and the infectiously raucous Koko Taylor, who benefits from an incredible backing band of Little Walter, Hound Dog Taylor, Dillard Crume and Odet Payne as she belts out "Wang Dang Doodle" and "What Kind Of Man Is This". But the mere 36 minutes playing time (surely there was more material recorded which could have been added) and the dodgy sound balance on some tracks make a curate's egg out of what should have been a double-voiler.

the charts

Every month on this page, a selection of informative, contentious and plain opinionated statistics from the extraordinary orbit of the world's chart-topping music magazine. Why not send us your own current playlist?

blues best-sellers

1. Bottles, Knives & Steel – *The Slide Guitar Collection* Various (CBS)
2. Way Down South *Matt Garter Marple* (Antone's)
3. Raunchy Business: Hot Nuts & Lollipops Various (CBS)
4. Yak A Dak *Chuck Higgins* (Saxophonograph)
5. The Complete Recordings *Robert Johnson* (CBS)
6. The Library Of Congress Recordings *See How* (Travellin' Man)
7. Live And Rare *Big Jay McNeely* (Saxophonograph)
8. More Louisiana Swamp Blues Various (Flyright)
9. The Chess Box *Savoy Big Williamson* (Chess/Charly)
10. Boogie Awhile *Jake Lee Hooker* (Krazy Kat)

Chart courtesy of Mick Hafford at Dorelli's Blues & Folk Shop, 21 Tower Street, London WC2

ten great robots

1. Robby (Forbidden Planet)
2. K9 (Dr Who)
3. R2D2 (Star Wars)
4. Asha (Alien)
5. Tin Man (Wizard Of Oz)
6. Lt Cmdr Data (Star Trek)
7. Kryton (Red Dwarf)
8. Iron Man (Ted Hughes)
9. Tinrib (Viz)
10. I (Isaac Asimov)

Compiled by Anne de Reyl, Cy Berg and Robin Lewis Simenon

ten records guaranteed to rid your house of unwanted guests

1. You Must Be Certain Of The Devil *Diamonds Galore*
2. The Grey Scale *David Carrington*
3. Caucasian Lullaby *Slap Happy/Henry Cow*
4. Heathrow EP *Folk Under Fly*
5. The James Brown Side Of "George & James" *The Residents*
6. The Glory!!! Of The Human Voice *Florence Foster Jenkins et al*
7. Never Been In A Riot EP *The Mekons*
8. The Otherwise Very Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz *Michael Nyman*
9. Piano Sonata No 3 ("The Bastard") *Andrew Tarr*
10. Metal Machine Music *Lee Ritenour*

Chart sent in by reader Paul Simpkin of London SW9

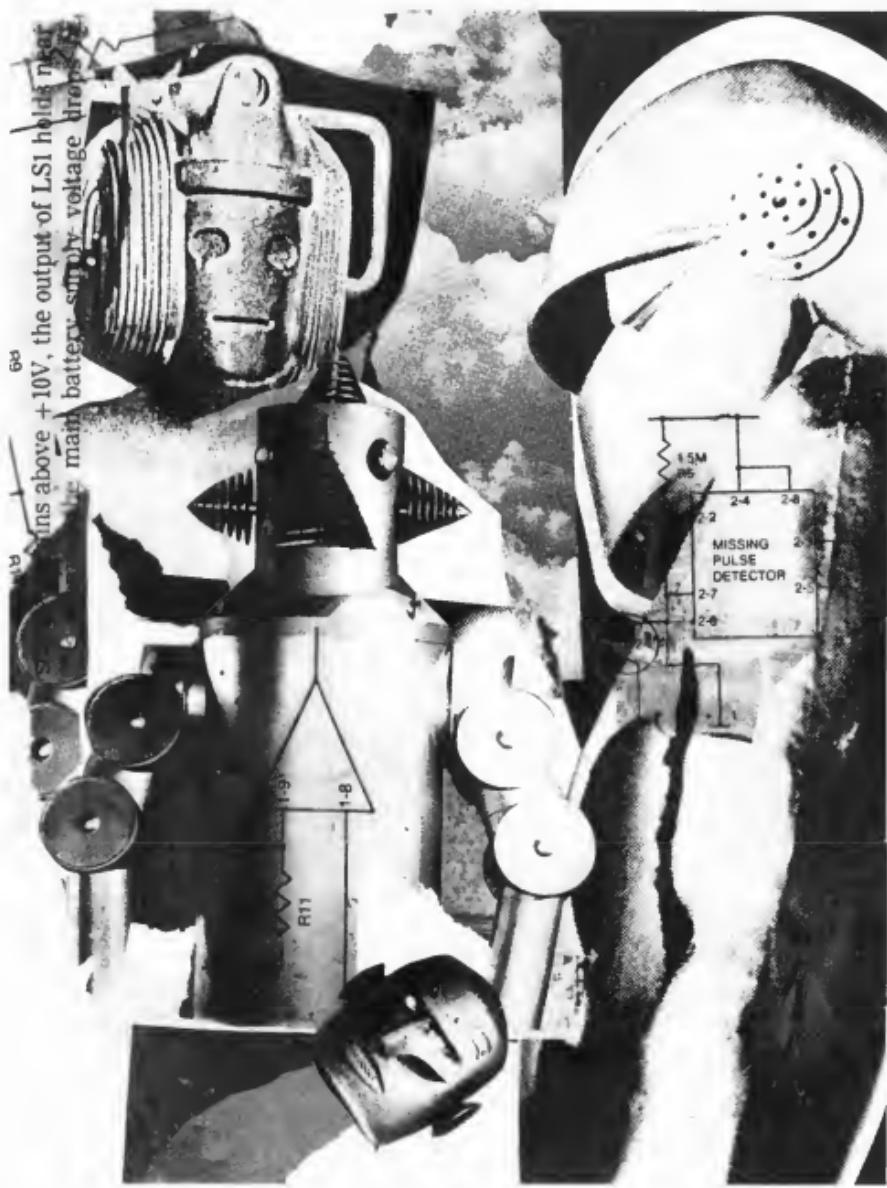
"four seasons" best-sellers

1. Nigel Kennedy, ECO (EMI, full-price)
2. Anne-Sophie Mutter, VPO/Karajan (HMV, full-price)
3. Various soloists, AAM/Huguenot (L'Oiseau Lyre, full-price)
4. Simon Standage, English Concert/Pinnock (Archiv, full-price)
5. Alan Loveday, ASMF/Marriner (Argo, full-price)
6. Various soloists, IPO/Melba (DG, full-price)
7. Itzhak Perlman, LPO (EMI Studio, mid-price)
8. Kenneth Sillito, Virtuosi Of England/Dawson (CFP, budget-price)
9. Nils-Erik Sparf, Det Ny Tidens Baroque Ensemble (BIS, full-price)
10. Viktoria Mullova, COE/Arbabi (Philips, full-price)

Chart of the best-selling versions of Vivaldi's Four Seasons courtesy of the Classical Dept.

HMV, Oxford Circus, London W1

above +10V, the output of LS1 holds \overline{Q}_1 main battery supply voltage.



Radiotherapy by Simon Brewster

Igor Stravinsky continued from page 28

genuine reach. A minor piece at major length.

IF SERIALISM became the "modern" outside spur the ageing Stravinsky used to keep himself young and spiky, an earlier one was of course jazz (a music just as much tilted towards sound and brevity). Andre Hodeir is justifiably caustic about the quality of jazz Stravinsky and a clutch of minor French moderns can have been exposed to at the earliest stages of their infatuation (no names, of jazz musicians or music, are at this point ever quoted).

All the same, the various "jazz" pieces on the first disc of *Chamber Music & Historical Recordings* (SM2K 46297, including *Praeludium For Jazz Ensemble*, *Ragtime*, *Tango*, and the famous *Ebony Concerto*, composed for the Woody Herman orchestra, which here has Benny Goodman on clarinet) certainly have a wonky energy not necessarily apparent on the straighter, more obviously classical/academic work on the second disc (which includes *Duo Concertant*, *Concerto For Two Pianos*, and *Sonata For Two Pianos*).

Ragtime is the cymbalom piece ("a monstrous stylisation, but its ugliness is appealing" says Hodeir); *Ebony Concerto* is more about sonority than syncopation or swing, but holds up far better than you'd expect; the 1920 tribute to Debussy, *Symphonies Of Wind Instruments*, is also present on disc one.

The remaining sets – *Oratorio/Melodrama* (SM3K 46300) and *Sacred Works* (SM3K 46301) – can be seen to chronicle the growth of his deepest, least populist feelings: out of the

bare-stage pagan-Greek spectacles of *Oedipus Rex* and *Persephone* to the sombre religious terror of a piece like *Threni (Id Est Lamentations Jeremiæ Prophetae)*. He'd written religious works from the beginning, but it was only after WW2 that the force of his latent Orthodox faith seemed to burst out of them, as if they were all that mattered. Stillness and darkness stand guard behind all the motion and colour even of that first youthful explosion of possibility (and perhaps behind all the diversions and evasions of the interwar years): by the end, he'd focussed and condensed his mastery – of perhaps five centuries of compositional strategy – down to a pure expression of both. By then, he had nothing left to distract him.

ALL OF which is a lot of Stravinsky: except for the incurable, probably too much (I haven't even mentioned *Ballet Suites* SMK 46294 – reworks of *Petrushka*, *Pulcinella* and *Firebird* – and *Robert Craft Conducts* SM3K 46302, recorded under Stravinsky's supervision, when he was no longer able to conduct himself; this includes *Abraham And Isaac*, *Requiem Canticles* and *Danse Concertante* – the piece that was boozed by a young Pierre Boulez at its post-war debut). Cutting it back to its bare essentials is tricky, as almost all sets include one significant piece, and only *Ballets Vol 1* includes no make-weight. Performances get more precise as composition date gets closer to recording date (*Rite* and *Petrushka* are, um, exuberantly untidy, to say the least). So, my suggestion for the short course – *Ballets Vol 1*, *Chamber Music & Historical Recordings*, *Sacred Works*. *

Michael Brecker

Michael Brecker continued from page 36

was approached by Arista to do an album. We put the two things together, the idea of just playing and these very complex, very dynamic compositions, and came up with the first Brecker Brothers album. As it turned out it was quite successful and we ended up doing five more after that. My favourite is the live one, *Heavy Metal Be Bop*. That kind of sums up the group's music and attitude for me.

The Brecker Brothers split up in 1978 when your contract with Arista ended. You then joined Steps with Mike Manieri, Eddie Gomez, Steve Gadd and Don Grolnick. That was an acoustic group at first. Why did it make the transition to an electric, fusion-orientated outfit?

Well, now we're getting into the 80s and that era provided a revolution in digital and audio music technology and as a group we got very interested in the possibilities of using it. It was a gradual process. I remember Mike first started triggering the synth with the vibraphone. Then we added a sequencer. Then Eddie left and Victor Bailey joined on electric bass. Then when the EWI (Electronic Wind Instrument) first came out that began my own journey into musical synthesis. You've said that *Steps* provided an ideal framework for you as a

soloist. *Why did you eventually leave the group?*

After my first solo record came out I committed myself to touring behind it quite extensively. I realised that if I also toured with Steps I'd never be at home. As I'd just started a family at that point I decided one thing had to go and that was Steps. It was a sad and painful decision to make because I did love being in the group, we made some great albums together and had a lot of fun.

Do you make a conscious effort to have a life away from music? Not really. When I'm home I spend time with my family, do things around the house, go to the movies, read. But my interests are basically centred around music.

What does the future hold?

Once this tour's finished I'm going to start work on a new solo album, possibly with my current group of Joey Calderazzo, Adam Nussbaum and Jay Anderson, and there's also going to be a Brecker Brothers reunion record with Randy. We've finally agreed to do that. Both projects are very much in the planning stages right now.

Other than that the idea is to keep on practising, try and better myself as a musician, that's the perpetual experience. *

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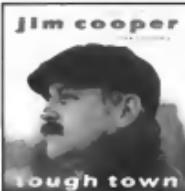
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John Lee Hooker continued from page 41

making cameo appearances in *The Colour Purple*, *The Blues Brothers* and on Pete Townshend's *Irrm Man LP* (in the title role). No doubt he'd have been content to jog on that way – but then, about four years ago, along came Mike Kappus, the manager who engineered Robert Cray's career.

Kappus's Rosebud Agency was involved in Muddy Waters's late 70s renaissance, when Johnny Winter produced and played on a string of superb Waters albums on Blue Sky, and Kappus determined to do the same for Hooker. With guitarist Roy Rogers of the Delta Rhythm Kings producing, Hooker was booked into San Francisco's Russian Hill studios, where he entertained a stream of guests.

The result, of course, was *The Healer*, Hooker's first LP for five years, and a record of stunning brilliance. Aided by excellent videos with Bonnie Raitt for "I'm In The Mood" and Carlos Santana for "The Healer", Hooker crossed over into the rock market in a way that no traditional bluesman had ever managed before. Not only did he receive his first gold discs (for album sales in the UK, Canada, Holland, Australia and New Zealand) and his first Grammy award (for "I'm In The Mood"), but he even got into the Dutch Top Ten singles (with "The Healer").

Hooker has spent the past two years in a dream – playing with the Stones in a televised concert, appearing on *Late Night With Letterman*, guesting on a Branford Marsalis album, getting together with Miles Davis and Taj Mahal to create a sultry soundtrack for *The Hot Spot* . . .

Interest in Hooker has never been greater. A couple of months ago there was *Boogie Awhile*, which unearthed previously unknown songs from his earliest days. This month there's *Half A Stranger*, a new compilation of Modern material. Best of all, he'll be making a rare live appearance at Crystal Palace, which will be backed up by a new single with Robert Cray, "Baby Lee", taken from *The Healer*.

Boom boom, as the Godfather would say.

don't you remember me (Charly CD245) 1948–50 Detroit. *Tracks from King*

Sixteen roughly recorded tracks as Texas Slim. Just Hooker and his electric guitar, it's his earliest LP apart from *Boogie Awhile* – a fine portrait of the artist as a Delta bluesman. "Don't Go Baby", which inspired Thom's 1965 hit "Baby Please Don't Go", appears to include the sound of a car going past the studio. Twelve tracks issued in '64 on Ember EMB3356 as *John Lee Hooker Singin' Blues*.

alone (Specialty SNTF5005) 1948–51 Detroit. *Tracks from Session*.

Wonderful 14-track set, "rich with the pristine power of the Mississippi Delta tradition", says Barry Hansen, who supervised the remastering of this 1970 release. The best collection of Hooker's electrified country blues, if you can afford it. (Deleted LP.)

no friend around (Red Lightnin' RL003) 1948–51 Detroit. *Tracks from King, Sun, Ray, Modern, Session, Staff, JVB*.

Good 14-track set of rare tracks cut mainly under pseudonyms – Birmingham Sun and his Magic Guitar, Delta John, Texas Slim, Johnny Williams. All solo bar one with piano. Curiosities: an acoustic guitar excursion and a solo instrumental. (LP only.)

the detroit lion (Demon FIENDCD154) 1948–52 (plus one 1961) Detroit. *Tracks from Session*.

Carefully remastered 15-track set of recordings by Bernie Besman, including the original "Boogie Chilien" and the 1951 "I'm In The Mood", with perfect support guitars from Andrew Dunham – Hooker's partner before Eddie Kirkland. An excellent selection of raw Hooker, sticking close to his country blues roots.

half a stranger (Mainstream MDCD903) 1948–54 Detroit. *Tracks from Modern*.

Varied new 18-track set ranging from the boozing sex-driven "Shake Holler & Run" (a reworking of Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle And Roll") to the semi-acoustic Delta blues of "Crawling King Snake". "Boogie Chilien" and "I'm In The Mood" are present and correct, but best are the abrasively over-amplified "Queen Bee", "Hobo Blues" and "Down Child" – an awesome collision between country and city.

boogie chilien (Official 6029) 1948–54 Detroit. *Tracks from Modern*

Beautifully presented 16-track Danish import. Excellent selection solo, with Kirkland, and a few Joe Turner-style group items. (LP only.)

john lee hooker (Blues Collection ORO119) 1949–61 Detroit and Chicago. *Tracks from Modern, Hi-Q, Ver-Jay*.

Curious 14-track set, seven with various larger groups – sax, piano, organ – including the "Tequila" riff on "Keep Your Hands To Yourself", plus a couple of very raw country blues, three classics and a Hooker-style solo boogie by someone (Eddie Kirkland?) that's definitely not Hooker. Curious price too: £3.05 CD!

the collection (Deja Vu DV2033) 1948–61. Detroit and Chicago. *Tracks from Modern, Ver-Jay*

Definitive 20-track set with almost every important cut from "Boogie Chilien" to "Boom Boom". Every track a masterpiece – and budget priced too.

detroit blues (Flyright FLYCD23) 1950–51 Philadelphia and Detroit. *Tracks from Gotham and Staff*

Eleven Hooker tracks on 19-track CD that also includes five songs by Eddie Burns (two with Hooker on guitar) and two by Baby Boy Warren. The Hooker stuff is very rare – three were previously unused: "Questionnaire Blues" is about joining the army, which Hooker didn't seriously do.

don't turn me from your door (Atlantic HA-K8097) 1953 Cincinnati and 1961 Miami. *Tracks from DeLuxe, Racket, Atta*

JOHN LEE HOOKER – Selected Record Guide

THE EARLY YEARS

The earliest material, originally on 78s on Modern and many other labels, appears on a huge number of compilations. Fortunately, there's very little overlap – unlike the Vee Jay tracks, which crop up time and again. As Hooker virtually never made a bad record at this time, you can pick up any LP of these years with confidence.

boogie awhile (Krazy Kat KK200) 1948–53 Detroit.

Tracks from JVB, Danieland, Staff, Press.

Fascinating new 31-track set of rare material recorded in the back room of Joe Von Battle's record shop, including previously unknown pre-*Boogie Chilien* material. A collector's dream, but beware the scratchy sound of tracks taken direct from old 78s Best sleeve note ever. Also available as a 20-track CD (OKKCD03) minus alternate versions and surface noise – "for people who don't need every single belch and fart", to quote label boss Bruce Baum.

Improvisational 12-track set, mostly solo, first compiled in 1963. The eight '53 tracks were first issued as John Lee Booker. Although eight years apart, both sessions put unusual emphasis on Hooker's tremolously distorted guitar. The old-fashioned second singer on 'Guitar Lovin' Man' is Eddie Kirkland. (Deleted LP.)

THE R&B RABBLE-ROUSER

boogie chillum (Double Play GRP023) 1956-63 Chicago (plus two live at Newport '60). *Tracks from Vee Jay*.

Great 28-track set mainly of rough-house Chicago R&B including Lefty Bates's lazy tremolo on "No Shoe" and the Vandellas backing Hooker on the swinging "Trico Blues", in which he exults that city's cable cars and fog in the morning. Amazing value at £3.05 for the CD.

16 greatest hits (Biem/Semsa MC9004) 1951-67 Detroit and Chicago. *Tracks from Midnite, Vee Jay and Blueway*.

Superb 17-track set taking in an not only early R&B rough stuff, but very exciting '67 cuts with lead guitarist Wayne Bennett ("Cry Before I Go") and harmonica player Louis Myers ("Back Busters And Syndicators"). Cassette costs just £2.99.

dimples (DJM DJD28026) 1955-61 Chicago. *Tracks from Vee Jay*.

Well-presented 28-track set of pure downhome R&B. Released 1977, but the best Vee Jay collection if you can find it. (Deleted double-LP.)

the best of john lee hooker (GNP Crescendo 2-10007) 1956-63 Chicago, New York and Newport. *Tracks from Vee Jay*.

Twenty-track 1987 US import double LP with some (by no means all) the best Vee Jay R&B plus three live from '65 Newport Folk Fest and two solo in a NY studio. Much of this LP overlaps with *The Folk Lore Of John Lee Hooker*, a 12-track 1961 Vee Jay album issued in the UK as Stareide SL10014.

THE 60S BLUES SINGER

house of the blues (Charly CD RED5) 1951-2 Detroit and 1966 Chicago. *Originally Chess LP1438/PL51508*.

Two old Chess LPs on one CD. *House Of The Blues* was a classic 12-track LP which converted many when issued here on Pye International NPL28042 in '64. Largely solo, great sound — Hooker at his most menacing. Includes "Ground Hog Blues" and "Leave My Wife Alone". *The Real Folk Blues* was a wonderfully rough-and-ready R&B session. Brilliant sound, very exciting moments when Hooker and lead guitarist Eddie Blues solo completely oblivious to each other. Band often gets lost. The two LPs have recently been available separately — on LP and CD — at US Chess 9258 (*House Of The Blues*) and UK MCA/Chess CHD9271 (*The Real Folk Blues*) and together on a UK MCA/Chess CD — CD9258.

the folk blues of john lee hooker (Ace CH282) 1959 Detroit.

Originally Rivertone 673020.

Folky 13-track solo acoustic guitar session. Hooker sometimes sounds uneasy trying to lay back' and play folk blues, but there's a pleasantly contemplative atmosphere. Available on Ace CDCH927 with *That's My Story*.

that's my story (Ace CH259) 1960 New York. *Originally Rivertone 673005*. Gentle 12-track set on a studio with the softly rustling bass and drums of Cannonball Adderley's sidemen Sam Jones and Lou Hayes — and Hooker on acoustic guitar. Previously titled *You're Listenin' Mr. Baby*. Available on Ace CDCH927 with *The Folk Blues Of*

live at cafe au-go-go (BGO CD39) 1966 New York.

Originally Blueway/HMV CSD3612.

Killer eight-track session with the Muddy Waters Band — untouchable Otis Spann on piano and four guitars tolling discordantly on Hooker's most malevolent versions of "I'm Bad Like Jesse James" and "I'll Never Get Out Of These Blues Alive". Very doomy and very very good.

simply the truth (BGO LP40) 1968 New York. *Originally Stareide SL10280*. "Give it while we have," Hooker shouts at the start of this eight-song session with a group of studio hornshots. Hooker's voice, with a judicious edge of reverb, rides resolutely over Ernie Hayes's funky Hammond and Bernard Purdie's driving beat. Best is the opener, "I Don't Wanna Go To Vietnam", a slow blues with Hooker suddenly inspired by the band's solid lift-off. BGO CD due soon.

tantalizing with the blues (MCA DMCL1686) 1965-71 New York, Chicago and San Francisco. *Tracks from Blueway/ABC*.

Interesting 13-track selection from other LPs, including the '67 cuts on *16 Greater Hits*, four from *Simply The Truth*, and a couple with Steve Miller (see next section). Spans a bizarre range of styles — from downhome R&B with Eddie Kirkland, via sophisticated blues with Bernard Purdie, to jamming with Van Morrison and a cast of thousands.

THE 70S BOOGIE MAN

hooker 'n' heat (See For Miles SEECD234) 1970 Los Angeles. *Originally Liberty LS734002*.

Surprisingly good 15-track session with LA boogie rockers Canned Heat, beginning with four solo tracks — Hooker's guitar wound up to deafening volume — then just John Lee and immaculate harp by Al Wilson (who died before the LP was released) and finishing with five full-on boogies which John enjoys just as much as the band. Between-tracks chat includes Hooker on Al Wilson, "You know I dig this kid's harmonica. I don't know how he follow me, but he do. I can't lose him!"

endless boogie (BGO CD70) 1970 San Francisco. *Originally ABC 270*.

Seven extended jams with local stars including Steve Miller. Pretty dull in parts. Excellent slow blues called "Kick His 4 Hit Kit U (Blues For Jimi And Janis)" — Hooker the hippy, trading licks with Taj Mahal's guitarist Jesse Davis — and a weird title track with Hooker inviolable under Miller's monstrous echoplex guitar but loving every minute.

never get out of these blues alive (See For Miles SEECD89) 1971 San Francisco, 1969 Los Angeles. *Originally ABC738/Blueway 0038*.

Adventurous 11-track set — seven from the original LP, which had John and his band (including son Robert on organ and guitarist Luther Tucker) with sundry stars — plus three from a 1969 LP with Earl Hooker and "A Good 'Un" with Steve Miller off *Endless Boogie*. Amazing slide effects by Benny Rowe on "Bumblebee, Bumblebee" (elsewhere Earl Hooker tries to outdo him by playing wah wah slide guitar!), brilliant violins on the mournful "TB Sheers". A superb album, only let down by a strained duet with Van Morrison on the title track.

THE 90S SUPERSTAR

the healer (Silverstone ORE CD508) 1989 San Francisco.

Latest ten-track masterpiece. Hooker's voice has never been recorded better. Includes solo work on 12-string and National steel-bodied guitar as well as all his celebrity guests. However, given the choice between this and anything from that old Detroit back room, it's no contest.

the hot spot (Antilles ANCD8755) 1990 Hollywood.

Marvelous movie soundtrack — 13 tracks called "Bank Robbery", "Blackmail", "End Credits", etc. Hooker moans and twangs along with Miles Davis's muted trumpet and Taj Mahal's unmistakable National steel. Some Hooker fans hate it; others find it evocative and atmospheric. It probably helps if you've seen the film.

Above titles are all currently available and all on CD except where otherwise stated. Prints from Virgin Megastore. Thanks to Les Fawcett, who is compiling an updated Hooker bibliography, it goes to his excellent Chess Blues Discography (£1.50 from 11 Front Brown, Faversham, Kent ME13 7DH).

The following are still available (* indicates that stocks are very low):

- *1 Steve Lacy, *Eric Dolphy, Harold Land, Ray Blake, John Stewart, Max Roach*.
- 12 **Afro Jazz**, Laurie Anderson, Chris McGregor, Phil Mantis & Roger Turner.
- 18 **Sonny Rollins**, Sonny Clark, Jayne Cortez, Bobby McFerrin, Stanley Jordan, Brianin Tavernier, Joe Farrell.
- 19 **Ornette Coleman**, Charlie Haden, Steve Lacy, Slim Gaillard, Jazz Cartouche.
- 20 **Art Blakey**, Hawk Mobley, Gantini Tru, Bobby Watson, Wayne & Bradford Marsalis.
- 21 **Chet Baker**, Prins Zonk, Jamasudade Tarama, Chacbo Valdés & Arturo Sandoval, Phil Wachman, Michael Nyman, Naushir Ertegan.
- 22 **John Coltrane**, Janis Blood Ulmer, The Great Store, Rabeh Blahy, Nathan Davis.
- 23 **Bill Laswell**, Loose Tailor, Calico Cruz, Anna O'Day, Alain Bash, Aris Lindsay.
- 24 **Betty Carter**, Jenny Smith, Paul Bley, John Abercrombie, Stanley Bacht, Maggie Nicols, Vanessa Art Orchestra.
- *25 **Courtney Pine**, Paul Motian, George Colanen, Luciano Berio, Gerry Mulligan.
- *26 **Chico Freeman**, Aida von Schlippenbach, Eddie Harris.
- 32 **Django Bates**, Denys Rollman, Tony Oxley, Diamanda Galas, Weather Report.
- 33 **Sonny Rollins**, Date Brubeck, The Beat, John Russell.
- 34/35 **Lester Bowie**, Bradford Marsalis, Dexter Gordon, Serge Chaloff, Louis Telo, Paul Lytle & Paul Lovens, Frank Zappa.
- 36 **Steve Winwood**, Phillip Best, Bill Frisell, Art Farmer, Takahiro Kondo.
- 37 **Bobby McFerrin**, Hampton Hawes, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, John Lurie.
- 38 **Wynton Marsalis**, Wayne Shorter, Nigel Kennedy.
- 39 **Andy Sheppard**, Gil Evans, Sheila Jordan, Todd Dameron.
- 40 **Ornette Coleman**, Charlie Haden, Charlie Rouse, Robert Ashley.
- 41 **Thelonious Monk**, Steve Colman, Steve Swallow, Kronos, Toney Smith.
- 42 **Horace Silver**, Bad Shank, Xero Siligky, Barney Wilen.

- 43 **Pat Metheny**, Robert Johnson, Albert Collini, Charlie Mariano, Irby Fingers.
- 44/47 **Courtney Pine**, Carl Taylor, Roland Kirk, Miki & Kate Wrenbrook, Bax Baderbergs, Bobo Gonzalez.
- 48 **Joe Henderson**, King Oliver, Wayne Marsh, Herman Leonard, Harold Budd, Dave Liebman.
- *49 **Julius Hemphill**, Frank Morgan & Mike Stern, Billy Eckstaz, Clark Tracey, Akemi Kubo.
- *50 **David Holland**, Tommy Smith, 50 Players, Italian Jazz.
- 51 **Marilyn Crispell**, Andy Kirk, Roland Perret, Gil Evans, Dennis Richardson, Carter Beauford.
- 52 **Sonny Rollins**, Ed Blackwell, Hank Roberts, Martin Archer, Ornette Coleman.
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- *63 **Duke Ellington**, Billy Strayhorn, Babs Moses, Orphy Robinson, Harry Connick, Ray Ellridge.
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- 70/71 **29th Street Saxophone Quartet**, Cassandra Wilson, Marcus Strick Smith, Lee Konitz, Michael Nyman, Bobby Bradford, John Rose Collective, Essential Album: *Of The 80s, British Jazz Supplement*. *Bugger your nose!*
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86 **John Coltrane**, Joe Mitchell, Herb Alpert, Chicago, Marilyn Crispell, Dick Heckstall-Smith.

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